

HENRY VIII. AND HIS COURT,

OR,

CATHARINE PARR.

A Historical Novel.

BY L. MÜHLBACH.

From the German,

BY REV. H. N. PIERCE, D. D.

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HENRY VIII. AND HIS COURT.

CHAPTER I.

CHOOSING A CONFESSOR.

It was in the year 1543. King Henry the Eighth of England that day once more pronounced himself the happiest and most enviable man in his kingdom, for to-day he was once more a bridegroom, and Catharine Parr, the youthful widow of Baron Latimer, had the perilous happiness of being selected as the King's sixth consort.

Merrily chimed the bells of all the steeples of London announcing to the people the commencement of that holy ceremony which sacredly bound Catharine Parr to the King as his sixth wife. The people, ever fond of novelty and show, crowded through the streets towards the royal palace to catch a sight of Catharine, when she appeared at her husband's side upon the balcony, to show herself to the English people as their queen, and to receive their homage in return.

Surely it was a proud and lofty success for the widow of a petty Baron to become the lawful wife of the King of England and to wear upon her brow a royal crown! But yet Catharine Parr's heart was moved with a strange fear, her cheeks were pale and cold, and before the altar, her closely compressed lips scarcely had the power to part and pronounce the binding "*I will.*"

At last the sacred ceremony was completed. The two spiritual dignitaries, Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, then, in accordance with court etiquette, led the young bride into her apartments, in order to bless them, and once more to pray with her, before the worldly festivities should begin.

Catharine, however pale and agitated, had yet sustained her part in the various ceremonies of the day with a true queenly bearing and dignity, and, as now with head proudly erect and firm step, she walked with a bishop at either side through the splendid apartments, no one suspected how heavy a burden weighed upon her heart, and what baleful voices were whispering in her breast.

Followed by her new Court, she had traversed with her companions the State apartments, and now reached the inner rooms. Here, according to the etiquette of the time, she must dismiss her Court, and only the two bishops and her ladies of honor were permitted to accompany the Queen into the drawing-room. But farther than this chamber, even

the bishops themselves might not follow her. The King himself had written down the order for the day, and he who swerved from this order in the most insignificant point, would have been proclaimed guilty of high treason, and perhaps, have been led out to death.

Catharine therefore turned with a languid smile to the two high Ecclesiastics and requested them to await here her summons. Then beckoning to her ladies of honor, she withdrew into her boudoir.

The two bishops remained by themselves in the drawing-room. The circumstance of their being alone seemed to impress them both alike unpleasantly; for, a dark scowl gathered on the brows of both, and they withdrew, as if at a concerted signal, to the opposite sides of the spacious apartment.

A long pause ensued. Nothing was heard save the regular ticking of a large clock of rare workmanship which stood over the fire-place, and from the street afar off, the rejoicing of the people, who surged towards the palace like a roaring sea.

Gardiner had stept to the window and was looking up with his peculiar dark smile at the clouds which, driven by the tempest, were sweeping across the heavens.

Cranmer stood by the wall on the opposite side, and sunk in sad thoughts, was contemplating a large portrait of Henry the Eighth, the masterly production of Holbein. As he gazed on that countenance indicative at once of so much dignity and so much ferocity; as he contemplated those eyes which shone with such gloomy severity, those lips on which was a smile at once voluptuous and fierce, there came over him a feeling of deep sympathy with the young woman, whom he had, that day, devoted to such splendid misery. He reflected that he had, in like manner, already conducted two wives of the King to the marriage altar, and had blessed their union. But he reflected too that he had also, afterwards, attended both these queens when they ascended the scaffold.

How easily might this pitiable young wife of the King fall a victim to the same dark fate! How easily might Catharine Parr, like Anna Boleyn and Catharine Howard purchase her short-lived glory with an ignominious death! At any time an inconsiderate word, a look, a smile, might be her ruin. For the King's choler and jealousy were incalculable, and, to his cruelty, no punishment seemed too severe for those by whom he fancied himself injured.

Such were the thoughts which occupied Bishop Cranmer. They softened him, and caused the dark wrinkles to disappear from his brow.

He now smiled to himself at the ill-humor which he had felt shortly before, and upbraided himself for having been so little mindful of his holy calling, and for having exhibited so little readiness to meet his enemy in a conciliating spirit.

For Gardiner was his enemy; *that* Cranmer very well knew. Gardiner had often enough showed him this by his deeds, as he had also taken pains by his words to assure him of his friendship.

But even if Gardiner hated him, it did not therefore follow that Cran-

mer was obliged to return that hatred, that he should denominate him his enemy, whom he, in virtue of their mutual high calling, was bound to honor and love as his brother.

The noble Cranmer was therefore ashamed of his momentary ill-humor. A gentle smile lighted up his peaceful countenance. With an air at once dignified and friendly, he crossed the room and approached the Bishop of Winchester.

Lord Gardiner turned towards him with morose looks, and without advancing from the embrasure of the window in which he was standing, waited for Cranmer to advance to him. As he looked into that noble smiling countenance, he had a feeling, as if he must raise his fist and dash it into the face of this man, who had the boldness to wish to be his equal, and to contend with him for fame and honor.

But he reflected in good time that Cranmer was still the King's favorite, and therefore he must proceed to work against him with great caution.

So he forced these fierce thoughts back into his heart, and let his face again assume its wonted grave and impenetrable expression.

Cranmer now stood close before him, and his bright, beaming eye was fixed upon Gardiner's sullen countenance.

I come to your Highness, said Cranmer, in his gentle pleasant voice, to say to you that I wish with my whole heart, the Queen may choose you for her confessor and spiritual director, and to assure you, that, should this be the case, there will not be in my soul, on that account, the least rancor, or the slightest dissatisfaction. I shall fully comprehend it, if her Majesty chooses the distinguished and eminent Bishop of Winchester as her confessor, and the esteem and admiration which I entertain for you can only be enhanced thereby. In confirmation of this, permit me to offer you my hand.

He presented his hand to Gardiner, who, however, took it reluctantly and but for a moment.

Your Highness is very noble, and at the same time a very subtle diplomatist, for you only wish in an adroit and ingenious way to give me to understand how I am to act should the Queen choose you for her spiritual director. But that she will do so, you know as well as I. It is therefore for me only a humiliation which etiquette imposes when she compels me to stand here and wait to see whether I shall be chosen, or contemptuously thrust aside.

Why will you look at matters in so unfriendly a light? said Cranmer, gently. Wherefore will you consider it a mark of contempt, if you are not chosen to an office, to which indeed neither merit nor worthiness can call us, but only the personal confidence of a young woman.

Oh! you admit that I shall not be chosen? cried Gardiner, with a malicious smile.

I have already told you that I am wholly uninformed as to the Queen's wish, and I think it is known that the Bishop of Canterbury is wont to speak the truth.

Certainly that is known, but it is known also that Catharine Parr was

a warm admirer of the Bishop of Canterbury, and now that she has gained her end and become queen, she will make it her duty to show her gratitude to him.

You would by that insinuate that I have made her queen. But I assure your Highness, that here also, as in so many other matters, which relate to myself, you are falsely informed.

Possibly ! said Gardiner, coldly. At any rate, it is certain that the young Queen is an ardent advocate of the abominable new doctrine which, like the plague, has spread itself from Germany over all Europe, and scattered mischief and ruin through all Christendom. Yes, Catharine Parr, the present Queen leans to that heretic, against whom the Holy Father at Rome has hurled his crushing anathema. She is an adherent of the Reformation.

You forget, said Cranmer, with an arch smile, that this anathema was hurled against the head of our King also, and that it has shown itself equally ineffectual against Henry the Eighth, as against Luther. Besides I might remind you, that we no longer call the Pope of Rome, "Holy Father," and that you yourself have recognized the King as the head of our Church.

Gardiner turned away his face in order to conceal the vexation and rage which distorted his features. He felt that he had gone too far, that he had betrayed too much of the secret thoughts of his soul. But he could not always control his violent and passionate nature ; and however much a man of the world and diplomatist he might be, still there were moments when the fanatical priest got the better of the man of the world, and the diplomate was forced to give way to the minister of the church.

Cranmer pitied Gardiner's confusion, and following the native goodness of his heart, he said pleasantly : Let us not strive here about dogmas, nor attempt to determine whether Luther or the Pope is most in the wrong. We stand here in the chamber of the young Queen. Let us, therefore, occupy ourselves a little with the destiny of this young woman, whom God has chosen for so brilliant a lot.

Brilliant ? said Gardiner, shrugging his shoulders. Let us first wait for the termination of her career, and then decide whether it has been brilliant.

Many a queen before this has fancied that she was resting on a couch of myrtles and roses, and has suddenly become conscious that she was lying on a red hot gridiron, which consumed her.

It is true, murmured Cranmer, with a slight shudder, it is a dangerous lot to be the King's consort. But just on that account, let us not make the perils of her position still greater, by adding to them our own enmity and hate. Just on that account I beg you, (and on my part I pledge you my word for it) that, let the choice of the Queen be as it may, there may be no feeling of anger, and no desire for revenge in consequence. My God, the poor women are such odd beings, so unaccountable in their wishes and in their inclinations !

Ah! it seems you know the women very intimately, cried Gardiner, with a malicious laugh. Verily, were you not Bishop of Canterbury, and had not the King prohibited the marriage of ecclesiastics as a very grave crime, one might suppose that you had a wife yourself, and had gained from her a thorough knowledge of female character.

Cranmer, somewhat embarrassed, turned away, and seemed to evade Gardiner's piercing look. We are not speaking of myself, said he at length, but of the young Queen, and I entreat for her your good wishes. I have seen her to-day almost for the first time, and have never spoken with her, but her countenance has touchingly impressed me, and it appeared to me, her looks besought us to remain at her side, ready to help her on this difficult pathway, which five wives have already trod before her, and in which they found only misery and tears, disgrace and blood.

Let Catharine beware then that she does not forsake the right way as her five predecessors have done, exclaimed Gardiner. May she be prudent and cautious, and may she be enlightened by God, that she may hold the true faith, and have true wisdom, and not allow herself to be seduced into the crooked path of the godless and heretical, but remain faithful and steadfast with those of the true faith.

Who can say who are of the true faith? murmured Cranmer, sadly. There are so many paths leading to heaven, who knows which is the right one?

That which *we* tread! cried Gardiner, with all the overweening pride of a minister of the church. Woe to the Queen should she take any other road! Woe to her if she lends her ear to the false doctrines which come ringing over here from Germany and Switzerland, and in the worldly prudence of her heart imagines that she can rest secure. I will be her most faithful and zealous servant, if she is with me; I will be her most implacable enemy if she is against me.

And will you call it, *being against you*, if the Queen does not choose you for her confessor.

Will you ask me to call it, "*being for me*"?

Now God grant that she may choose you! exclaimed Cranmer, fervently, as he clasped his hands and raised his eyes to heaven. Poor unfortunate Queen! The first proof of thy husband's love may be thy first misfortune! Why gave he thee the liberty of choosing thine own spiritual director? Why did not he choose for thee?

And Cranmer dropped his head upon his breast, and sighed deeply.

At this instant, the door of the royal chamber opened, and Lady Jane, daughter of Earl Douglas, and first maid of honor to the Queen, made her appearance on the threshold.

Both bishops regarded her in breathless silence. It was a serious, a solemn moment, the deep importance of which was very well comprehended by all three.

Her Majesty, the Queen, said Lady Jane, in an agitated voice, her Majesty requests the presence of Lord Cranmer, Archbishop of Canter-

bury, in her cabinet, in order that she may perform her devotions with him.

Poor Queen! murmured Cranmer, as he crossed the room to go to Catharine. Poor Queen! she has just made an implacable enemy.

Lady Jane waited till Cranmer had disappeared through the door, then hastened with eager steps to the Bishop of Winchester, and dropping on her knee, humbly said, Grace, your Highness, grace! My words were in vain, and were not able to shake her resolution.

Gardiner raised up the kneeling maiden, and forced a smile. It is well, said he, I doubt not of your zeal. You are a true handmaid of the church, and she will love and reward you for it as a mother! It is then decided. The Queen is——

Is a heretic, whispered Lady Jane. Woe to her!

And will you be true, and will you faithfully adhere to us?

True, in every thought of my being, and every drop of my heart's blood.

So shall we overcome Catharine Parr, as we overcame Catharine Howard. To the block with the heretic. We found means of bringing Catharine Howard to the scaffold; you, Lady Jane, must find the means of leading Catharine Parr the same way.

I will find them, said Lady Jane, quietly. She loves and trusts me. I will betray her friendship in order to remain true to my religion.

Catharine Parr then is lost, said Gardiner, aloud.

Yes—she is lost, responded Earl Douglas, who had just entered, and caught the last words of the bishop. Yes, she is lost, for we are her inexorable and ever vigilant enemies. But I deem it not altogether prudent to utter words like these in the Queen's drawing-room. Let us therefore choose a more favorable hour! Besides, your Highness, you must betake yourself to the grand reception-hall, where the whole court is already assembled, and now only awaits the King to go in formal procession for the young Queen, and conduct her to the balcony. Let us go then.

Gardiner nodded in silence, and betook himself to the reception hall.

Earl Douglas with his daughter followed him. Catharine Parr is lost, whispered he in Lady Jane's ear. Catharine Parr is lost, and you shall be the King's seventh wife.

Whilst this was passing in the drawing-room, the young Queen was on her knees before Cranmer, and with him sending up to God fervent prayers for prosperity and peace. Tears filled her eyes, and her heart trembled as if before some approaching calamity.

CHAPTER II.

THE QUEEN AND HER FRIEND.

At last this long day of ceremonies and festivities drew near its close, and Catharine might soon hope to be, for the time, relieved from this endless presenting and smiling, from this ever renewed homage.

At her husband's side she had shown herself on the balcony to receive the greetings of the people, and to bow her thanks. Then in the spacious audience chamber, her newly appointed Court had passed before her in formal procession, and she had exchanged a few meaningless, friendly words with each of these lords and ladies. Afterwards she had, at her husband's side, given audience to the deputations from the city and from Parliament. But it was only with a secret shudder that she had received from their lips the same congratulations and praises with which the authorities had already greeted five other wives of the King.

Still she had been able to smile and seem happy, for she well knew that the King's eye was never off of her, and that all these lords and ladies who now met her with such deference, and with homage apparently so sincere, were yet, in truth, all her bitter enemies. For by her marriage she had destroyed so many hopes, she had pushed aside so many who believed themselves better fitted to assume the lofty position of queen. She knew that these victims of disappointment would never forgive her this, that she, who was but yesterday their equal, had to-day soared above them, as queen and mistress; she knew that all these were watching with spying eyes her every word and action, in order, it might be, to forge therefrom an accusation or a death warrant.

But nevertheless she smiled! She smiled, though she felt that the choler of the King, so easily kindled and so cruelly vindictive, ever swung over her head like the sword of Damocles.

She smiled so that this sword might not fall upon her.

At length all these presentations, this homage and rejoicing were well over, and they came to the more agreeable and satisfactory part of the feast.

They went to dinner. That was Catharine's first moment of respite, of rest. For when Henry the Eighth seated himself at table, he was no longer the haughty monarch and the jealous husband, but merely the proficient artiste and the impassioned gourmand; and whether the pasty was well seasoned, and the pheasant of good flavor, was for him then a far more important question than any concerning the weal of his people, and the prosperity of his kingdom.

But after dinner came another respite, a new enjoyment, and this

time a more real one, which indeed for a while banished all gloomy forebodings and melancholy fears from Catharine's heart, and suffused her countenance with the rosy radiance of cheerfulness and happy smiles. For King Henry had prepared for his young wife a peculiar and altogether novel surprise. He had caused to be erected in the palace of Whitehall a stage, whereon was represented by the nobles of the Court, a comedy from Plautus. Heretofore there had been no other theatrical exhibitions than those which the people performed on the high festivals of the Church, the Morality and the Mystery plays. King Henry the Eighth was the first who had a stage erected for worldly amusement likewise, and caused to be represented on it subjects other than mere dramatized Church history. As he freed the Church from its spiritual head, the Pope, so he wished to free the stage from the Church, and to behold upon it other more lively spectacles than the roasting of saints and the massacre of inspired nuns.

And why, too, represent such mock tragedies on the stage, when the King was daily performing them in reality? The burning of Christian martyrs and inspired virgins was, under the reign of the Christian King Henry, such a usual and every day occurrence that it could afford a piquant entertainment neither to the Court nor to himself.

But the representation of a Roman comedy, that, however was a new and piquant pleasure, a surprise for the young Queen. He had the "Curculio" played before his wife, and if Catharine indeed could listen to the licentious and shameless jests of the popular Roman poet, only with bashful blushes, Henry was so much the more delighted by it, and accompanied the obscenest allusions and the most indecent jests with his uproarious laughter and loud shouts of applause.

At length this festivity was also over with, and Catharine was now permitted to retire with her attendants to her private apartments.

With a pleasant smile, she dismissed her cavaliers, and bade her women and her second maid of honor, Anne Askew, go into her boudoir and await her call. Then she gave her arm to her friend Lady Jane Douglas, and with her entered her cabinet.

At last she was alone; at last unwatched. The smile disappeared from her face, and an expression of deep sadness was stamped upon her features.

Jane, said she, prythee shut the doors and draw the window curtains, so that nobody can see me, nobody hear me. No one except yourself, my friend, the companion of my happy childhood. Oh, my God, my God, why was I so foolish as to leave my father's quiet lonely castle and go out into the world, which is so full of terror and horror?

She sighed and groaned deeply; and burying her face in her hands, she sank upon the ottoman, weeping and trembling.

Lady Jane observed her with a peculiar smile of malicious satisfaction. She is queen and she weeps, said she to herself. My God, how can a woman possibly feel unhappy, and she a queen?

She approached Catharine and seating herself on the tabouret at her feet, she impressed a fervent kiss on the Queen's drooping hand.

Your Majesty weeping! said she in her most insinuating tone. My God, you are then unhappy, and I received with a loud cry of joy, the news of my friend's unexpected good fortune. I thought to meet a queen, proud, happy and radiant with joy; and I was anxious and fearful lest the Queen might have ceased to my friend. Wherefore, I urged my father, as soon as your command reached us, to leave Dublin and hasten with me hither. Oh, my God, I wished to see you in your happiness and in your greatness.

Catharine removed her hands from her face and looked down at her friend with a sorrowful smile.

Well, said she, are you not satisfied, with what you have seen? Have I not the whole day displayed to you the smiling queen, worn a dress embroidered with gold; did not my neck glitter with diamonds, did not the royal diadem shine in my hair, and sat not the King by my side? Let that then be sufficient for the present. You have seen the queen all day long. Allow me now for one brief, happy moment to be again the feeling, sensitive woman, who can pour into the bosom of her friend all her complaint and her wretchedness. Ah Jane, if you knew how I have longed for this hour, how I have sighed after you as the only balm for my poor smitten heart, smitten even to death, how I have implored heaven for this day, for this one thing—give me back my Jane, so that she can weep with me, so that I may have one being at my side who understands me, and does not allow herself to be imposed upon by the wretched splendor of this outward display.

Poor Catharine! whispered lady Jane, poor Queen! Catharine started and laid her hand sparkling with brilliants on Jane's lips.

Call me not thus! said she. Queen! my God, is not all the fearful past heard again in that word? Queen! Is it not as much as to say, condemned to the scaffold and a public criminal trial? Ah Jane! a deadly tremor runs through my members. I am Henry the Eighth's sixth Queen—I shall also be executed, or, loaded with disgrace, be repudiated.

Again she hid her face in her hands, and her whole frame shook. So she saw not the smile of malicious satisfaction with which Lady Jane again observed her—She suspected not with what secret delight her friend heard her lamentations and sighs.

Oh! I am at least revenged! thought Jane while she lovingly stroked the Queen's hair. Yes, I am revenged! She has robbed me of a crown, but she is wretched—And in the golden goblet which she presses to her lips she will find nothing but wormwood! Now, if this sixth Queen dies not on the scaffold, still we may perhaps so work it, that she dies of anxiety; or deems it a pleasure to be able to lay down again her royal crown at Henry's feet.

Then said she aloud: But why these fears, Catharine? The King loves you; the whole Court has seen with what tender and ardent looks he has regarded you to-day, and with what delight he has listened to your every word—Certainly the King loves you!

Catharine seized her hand impulsively. The King loves me, whispered she, and I, I tremble before him—Yes, more than that, his love fills me with horror! His hands are dipped in blood, and as I saw him to-day in his crimson robes, I shuddered, and I thought how soon, and my blood too will dye this crimson!

Jane smiled. You are sick, Catharine, said she. This good fortune has taken you by surprise, and your overstrained nerves now depict before you all sorts of frightful forms. That is all.

No, no, Jane, these thoughts have ever been with me. They have attended me ever since the King selected me for his wife.

And why then did you not refuse him? asked Lady Jane. Why did you not say no, to the King's suit?

Why did I not do it, ask you? Ah Jane, are you such a stranger at this Court as not to know then that one must either fulfil the King's behests or die? My God, they envy me! They call me the greatest and most potent woman of England—They know not that I am poorer and more powerless than the beggar of the street, who at least has the power to refuse whom she will. I could not refuse. I must either die, or accept the royal hand which was extended to me. And I would not die yet, I have still so many claims on life and it has hitherto made good so few of them! Ah, my poor hapless existence, what has it been, but an endless chain of renunciations and deprivations; of leafless flowers and dissolving views? It is true, I have never learned to know what is usually called misfortune. But is there a greater misfortune than not to be happy, than to sigh through a life without wish or hope, to wear away the endless weary days of an existence without delight, yet surrounded with luxury and splendor?

You were not unfortunate, and yet you are an orphan, fatherless and motherless?

I lost my mother so early that I scarcely knew her. And when my father died, I could hardly consider it other than a blessing, for he had never shown himself a father, but always only as a harsh, tyrannical master to me.

But you were married?

Married! said Catharine with a melancholy smile. That is to say, my father sold me to a gouty old man, on whose couch I spent a few comfortless, awfully wearisome years, till Lork Neville made me a rich widow. But what did my independence avail me, when I had bound myself in new fetters? Hitherto I had been the slave of my father, of my husband: now, I was the slave of my wealth. I ceased to be a sick-nurse to become steward of my estate. Ah! this was the most tedious period of my life. And yet I owe to it my only real happiness, for at that period I became acquainted with you, my Jane, and my heart, which had never yet learned to know a tenderer feeling, flew to you with all the impetuosity of a first passion. Believe me, my Jane, when this long missing nephew of my husband came and snatched away from me his hereditary estate, and as the lord took possession of it, then the

thought that I must leave you and your father, the neighboring proprietor, was my only grief—Men commiserated me on account of my lost property. I thanked God that he had relieved me of this load, and I started for London, that I might at last live and feel, that I might learn to know real happiness or real misery.

And what did you find?

Misery, Jane, for I am queen.

Is that your sole unhappiness?

My only one, but it is great enough, for it condemns me to eternal anxiety, to eternal dissimulation. It condemns me to feign a love which I do not feel, to endure caresses which make me shudder, because they are an inheritance from five unfortunate women—Jane, Jane, do you comprehend what it is to be obliged to embrace a man, who has murdered three wives, and put away two? to be obliged to kiss this King whose lips open just as readily to utter vows of love, as sentences of death? Ah, Jane, I speak, I live, and still I suffer all the agonies of death! They call me a queen, and yet I tremble for my life every hour, and conceal my anxiety and fear beneath the appearance of happiness! My God, I am five and twenty, and my heart is still the heart of a child; it does not yet know itself, and now it is doomed never to learn to know itself; for I am Henry's wife, and to love another is, in other words, to wish to mount the scaffold. The scaffold! Look, Jane. When the King approached me and confessed his love and offered me his hand, suddenly there rose before me a fearful picture. It was no more the King whom I saw before me, but the hangman; and it seemed to me that I saw three corpses lying at his feet, and with a loud scream I sank senseless before him. When I revived the King was holding me in his arms. The shock of this unexpected good fortune, he thought, had made me faint. He kissed me and called me his bride; he thought not for a moment that I could refuse him. And I, despise me, Jane, I was such a dastard, that I could not summon up courage for a downright refusal. Yes, I was so craven also, as to be unwilling to die. Ah, my God, it appeared to me that life, at that moment beckoned to me with thousands of joys, thousands of charms, which I had never known, and for which my soul thirsted as for the manna in the Wilderness. I would live, live at any cost. I would gain myself a respite, so that I might once more share happiness, love, and enjoyment. Look, Jane, men call me ambitious. They say I have given my hand to Henry, because he is King. Ah, they know not how I shuddered at this royal crown. They know not that in anguish of heart, I besought the King not to bestow his hand upon me, and thereby rouse all the ladies of his kingdom as foes against me. They know not that I confessed that I loved him, merely that I might be able to add, that I was ready, out of love to him, to sacrifice my own happiness to his, and so conjured him to choose a consort worthy of himself, from the hereditary princesses of Europe.* But Henry re-

* *La vie d'Elizabeth, Reine d'Angleterre, Traduite de l'Italien de Monsieur Gregoire Leti, 2 vol. Amsterdam, 1694.*

jected my sacrifice. He wished to make a queen, in order to possess a wife, who may be his own property, whose blood, as her lord and master, he can shed. So I am Queen. I have accepted my lot, and henceforth my existence will be a ceaseless struggle and wrestling with death. I will at least sell my life as dearly as possible; and the maxim which Cranmer has given me shall hereafter be my guide on the thorny path of life!

And how runs this maxim? asked Jane—

Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, replied Catharine, with a languid smile, as she dropped her head upon her breast and surrendered herself to her painful and foreboding reflections.

Lady Jane stood opposite to her, and gazed with cruel composure upon the painfully convulsed countenance and at times violently trembling form of the young Queen, for whom all England that day kept festival, and who yet was sitting before her so wretched, and full of sorrow.

Suddenly Catharine raised her head. Her countenance had now assumed an entirely different expression. It was now firm, resolute and dauntless. With a slight inclination of the head, she extended her hand to Lady Jane, and drew her friend more closely to her.

I thank you, Jane, said she, as she imprinted a kiss upon her forehead. I thank you! You have done my heart good and relieved it of its oppressive load of secret anguish. He who can give his grief utterance, is already half cured of it. I thank you, then, Jane! Henceforth, you will find me calm and cheerful. The woman has wept before you, but the Queen is aware that she has a task to accomplish as difficult as it is noble, and I give you my word for it, she will accomplish it. The new light which has risen on the world shall no more be dimmed by blood and tears, and no more in this unhappy land, shall men of sense and piety be condemned as insurgents and traitors! This is the task which God has set me, and I swear that I will accomplish it! Will you help me in this, too, Jane?

Lady Jane responded faintly in a few words, which Catharine did not understand, and as she looked up to her, she noticed, with astonishment, the corpse-like pallor which had suddenly overspread the countenance of her maid of honor.

Catharine gave a start and fixed on her face a surprised and searching look.

Lady Jane cast down her eyes before that searching and flashing glance. Her fanaticism had for the moment got the better of her, and much as she was wont at other times to hide her thoughts and feelings, it had, at that moment, carried her away and betrayed her to the keen eye of her friend.

It is now a long while since we saw each other, said Catharine sadly. Three years! It is a long time for a young girl's heart! And you were those three years with your father in Dublin, at that rigidly popish court. I did not consider that! But however much your opinions may have changed, your heart, I know, still remains the same, and you will

ever be the proud, high-minded Jane, of former days, who could never stoop to tell a lie—no, not even if this lie would procure her profit and glory. I ask you then, Jane, what is your religion? Do you believe in the Pope of Rome, and the Church of Rome as the only channel of salvation? or do you follow the new teaching which Luther and Calvin have promulgated?

Lady Jane smiled. Would I have risked appearing before you, if I still reckoned myself of the Roman Catholic Church? Catharine Parr is hailed by the Protestants of England, as the new patroness of the persecuted doctrine, and already the Romish priests hurl their anathemas against you, and execrate you and your dangerous presence here. And you ask me, whether I am an adherent of that Church which maligns and damns you? You ask me whether I believe in the Pope, who has laid the King under an interdict, the King, who is not only my Lord and Master, but also the husband of my precious and noble Catharine? Oh, Queen, you love me not when you can address such a question to me.

And as if overcome by painful emotion, Lady Jane sank down at Catharine's feet, and hid her head in the folds of the Queen's robe.

Catharine bent down to raise her and take her to her heart. Suddenly she started, and a deathly paleness overspread her face. The King, whispered she, the King is coming—

CHAPTER III.

KING HENRY THE EIGHTH.

CATHARINE was not deceived. The doors were opened, and on the threshold appeared the Lord Marshal, with his golden mace.

His Majesty, the King! whispered he, in his grave, solemn manner, which filled Catharine with secret dread, as though he were pronouncing the sentence of death over her.

But she forced a smile and advanced to the door to receive the King. Now was heard a thunder-like rumble, and over the smoothly carpeted floor of the ante-room came rolling on the King's household equipage. This household equipage consisted of a large chair, resting on castors, which was moved by men in the place of horses, and to which they had, with artful flattery, given the form of a triumphal car of the old victorious Roman Cæsars, in order to afford the King, as he rolled through the halls, the pleasant illusion that he was holding a triumphal procession, and that it was not the burden of his heavy limbs which fastened him to his

imperial car. King Henry gave ready credence to the flattery of his truckle-chair and his courtiers, and as he rolled along in it through the saloons glittering with gold, and thro' halls adorned with Venitian mirrors, which reflected his form a thousand fold, he liked to lull himself into the dream of being a triumphing hero, and wholly forgot that it was not his deeds, but his fat, that had helped him to his triumphal car.

For that monstrous mass which filled up the colossal chair, that mountain of purple-clad flesh, that clumsy, almost shapeless shape, that was Henry the Eighth, King of merry England. But that mass had a head—a head full of dark and wrathful thoughts, a heart full of blood-thirsty and cruel lusts. The colossal body was indeed, by its physical weight, fastened to the chair. Yet his mind never rested, but he hovered, with the talons and flashing eye of the bird of prey, over his people, ever ready to pounce upon some innocent dove, to drink her blood and tear out her heart, that he might lay it, all palpitating, as an offering on the altar of his sanguinary god.

The King's sedan now stopped, and Catharine hastened forward with smiling face, to assist her royal husband in alighting.

Henry greeted her with a gracious nod, and rejected the proffered aid of the attendant pages.

Away, said he, away! My Catharine alone shall extend me her hand, and give me a welcome to the bridal-chamber. Go, we feel to-day as young and strong as in our best and happiest days, and the young Queen shall see, that it is no decrepid greybeard, tottering with age, who woos her, but a strong man rejuvenated by love. Think not, Kate, that I use my car because of weakness. No, it was only my longing for you which made me wish to be with you the sooner.

He kissed her with a smile, and lightly leaning on her arm, alighted from his car.

Away with the equipage, and with all of you! said he, we wish to be alone with this beautiful young wife, whom the Lord Bishops have to-day made our own.

At a signal from his hand, the brilliant cortege withdrew, and Catharine was alone with the King.

Her heart beat so wildly that it made her lips tremble, and her bosom swell high.

Henry saw it and smiled; but it was a cold, cruel smile, and Catharine grew pale before it.

He has only the smile of a tyrant; said she to herself. With this same smile, by which he would now give expression to his love, he yesterday, perhaps, signed a death-warrant, or will, to-morrow, witness an execution.

Do you love me, Kate? suddenly said the King, who had till now observed her in silence and thoughtfulness. Say, Kate, do you love me?

He looked steadily into her eyes, as though he would read her soul to the very bottom.

Catharine sustained his look, and did not drop her eyes. She felt that

this was the decisive moment which determined her whole future ; and this conviction restored to her all her self-possession and energy.

She was now no longer the shy, timid girl, but the resolute, proud woman, who was ready to wrestle with fate for greatness and glory.

Do you love me, Kate ? repeated the King, and his brow already began to darken.

I know not ! said Catharine with a smile, which enchanted the King, for there was quite as much graceful coquetry as bashfulness on her charming face.

You know not ? replied Henry, astonished. Now, by the Mother of God, it is the first time in my life that a woman has ever been bold enough to return me such an answer ! You are a bold woman, Kate, to hazard it, and I praise you for it. I love bravery because it is something I so rarely see. They all tremble before me, Kate. All ! They know that I am not intimidated by blood, and in the might of my royalty, I subscribe a death-warrant with the same calmness of soul as a love letter.

Oh, you are a great King, murmured Catharine.

Henry did not notice her. He was wholly buried in one of those self contemplations, to which he so willingly surrendered himself, and which generally had for their subject his own greatness and sovereignty.

Yes, continued he, and his eyes which, in spite of his corpulency and his extremely fleshy face, were yet large and wide open, shone more brightly.

Yes, they all tremble before me, for they know that I am a righteous and powerful King, who spares not his own blood, if it is necessary to punish and expiate crime, and with inexorable hand, punishes the sinner, though he were the nearest to the throne. Take heed to yourself, therefore, Kate, take heed to yourself. You behold in me the avenger of God, and the judge of men. The King wears the crimson, not because it is beautiful, and glossy, but because it is red like blood, and because it is the King's highest prerogative to shed the blood of his delinquent subjects, and thereby expiate human crime. Thus only do I conceive of royalty, and thus only will I carry it out till the end of my days. Not the right to pardon, but the right to punish, is that whereby the ruler manifests himself before the lower classes of mankind. God's thunder should be on his lips, and the King's wrath should descend like lightning on the head of the guilty.

But God is not only wrathful, but also merciful and forgiving, said Catharine, as she lightly and shyly leant her head on the King's shoulder.

Just that is the prerogative of God above kings, that He can, as it pleases him, show mercy and grace, where we can only condemn and punish. There must be something in which God is superior to kings, and greater than they. But how, Kate, you tremble ; and the lovely smile has vanished from your countenance ! Be not afraid of me, Kate !

Be always frank with me, and without deceit; then I shall always love you, and iniquity will then have no power over you! And now, Kate, tell me, and explain to me. You do not know that you love me?

No, I do not know, your Majesty. And how should I be able to recognize, and know, and designate by name, what is strange to me, and what I have never before felt?

How, you have never loved, Kate? asked the King with a joyful expression.

Never! My father maltreated me, so that I could feel for him nothing but dread and terror.

And your husband, child? That man who was my predecessor in the possession of you. Did you not love your husband either?

My husband? asked she, abstractedly. It is true my father sold me to Lord Neville, and as the priest had joined our hands, men called him my husband. But he very well knew that I did not love him, nor did he require my love. He needed a nurse, not a wife. He had given me his name as a father gives his to a daughter—and I was his daughter, a true, faithful and obedient daughter, who joyfully fulfilled her duty and tended him till his death.

And after his death, child? Years have elapsed since then, Kate. Tell me, and I conjure you, tell me the truth, the simple plain truth! After the death of your husband, then even, did you never love?

He gazed with visible anxiety, with breathless expectation, deep into her eyes; but she did not drop them.

Sire, said she, with a charming smile, till a few weeks past, I have often mourned over myself; and it seemed to me that I must, in the desperation of my singular and cold nature, lay open my breast, in order to search there for the heart, which, senseless and cold, had never betrayed its existence by its stronger beating. Oh, Sire, I was full of trouble about myself, and in my foolish rashness, I accused heaven of having robbed me of the noblest feeling and the fairest privilege of any woman—the capacity for loving.

Till the past few weeks, did you say, Kate? asked the King, breathless with emotion.

Yes, Sire, until the day on which you, for the first time, graciously afforded me the happiness of speaking with me.

The King uttered a low cry, and drew Catharine with impetuous vehemence into his arms.

And since, tell me now, you dear little dove, since then, does your heart throb?

Yes, Sire, it throbs, oh, it often throbs to bursting! When I hear your voice, when I behold your countenance, it is as if a cold tremor rilled through my whole being, and drove all my blood to the heart. It is as though my heart anticipated your approach before my eyes discern you. For even before you draw near me, I feel a peculiar trembling of the heart, and the breath is stifled in my bosom; then I always know that you are coming, and that your presence will relieve this pe-

culiar tension of my being. When you are not by me, I think of you, and when I sleep, I dream of you. Tell me, Sire, you who know everything, tell me, know you now whether I love you?

Yes, yes; you love me; cried Henry, to whom this strange and joyous surprise had imparted youthful vivacity and warmth. Yes, Kate, you love me; and if I may trust your dear confession, I am your first love. Repeat it yet again; you were nothing but a daughter to Lord Neville?

Nothing more, Sire!

And after him have you had no lover?

None, Sire!

And can it be that so happy a marvel has come to pass? and that I have made, not a widow, but a young maiden, my Queen?

As he now gazed at her with warm, passionate, tender looks, Catharine cast down her eyes, and a deep blush covered her sweet face.

Ah, a woman's bashful blushes, what an exquisite sight! cried the King, and while he wildly pressed Catharine to his bosom, he continued: Oh, are we not all foolish and short sighted men, all of us, yes even we kings? In order that I might not be, perhaps, forced to send my sixth wife also to the scaffold, I chose, in trembling dread of the deceitfulness of your sex, a widow for my queen, and this widow with a blessed confession, mocks at the new law of the wise Parliament, and makes good to me what she never promised.*

Come, Kate, give me a kiss. You have opened before me to-day a happy, blissful future, and prepared for me a great and unexpected pleasure. I thank you for it, Kate, and the Mother of God be my witness, I will never forget it.

And drawing a rich diamond ring from his own finger, and, putting it upon Catharine's, he continued: Be this ring a remembrancer of this hour, and when you hereafter present it to me, with a request, I will grant that request, Kate!

He kissed her forehead, and was about to press her more closely in his arms, when suddenly from without was heard the dull roll of drums, and the ringing of bells.

The King started a moment and released Catharine from his arms. He listened; the roll of drums continued, and now and then was heard in the distance that peculiar thundering and yet sullen roaring, which so much resembles the roar and rush of the sea, and which can be produced only by a large and excited mob.

The King, with a fierce curse, pushed open the glass door leading to the balcony, and walked out.

Catharine gazed after him with a strange, half timid, half scornful look. I have not at least told him that I love him, muttered she. He

* After Catharine Howard's infidelity and incontinency had been proved, and she had atoned for them by her death, Parliament enacted a law: "That if the King or his successors should intend to marry any woman whom they took to be a clean and pure maid—if she, not being so, did not declare the same to the King, it should be high treason; and all who knew it, and did not reveal it, were guilty of misprison of treason."

Burnet's History of the Reformation of the Church of England.—London, 1681, Vol. I, page 318.

has construed my words as it suited his vanity. No matter. I *will* not die on the scaffold!

With resolute step and firm, energetic air, she followed the King to the balcony. The roll of drums was kept up, and from all the steeples the bells were pealing. The night was dark and calm. All London seemed to slumber, and the dark houses around about stood up out of the universal darkness like huge coffins.

Suddenly the horizon began to grow bright, and on the sky appeared a streak of fiery red, which, blazing up higher and higher, soon illuminated the entire horizon with a crimson glow, and even shed its glaring fiery beams over the balcony, on which stood the royal pair.

Still the bells clanged and clamored; and blended with their peals was heard now and then, in the distance, a piercing shriek and a clamor as of thousands and thousands of confusedly mingled voices.

Suddenly the King turned to Catharine, and his countenance, which was just then overspread by the fire-light as with a blood-red veil, had now assumed an expression of savage demoniacal delight.

Ah, said he, I know what it is. You had wholly bewildered me, and stolen away my attention, you little enchantress. I had for a moment ceased to be a king, because I wished to be entirely your lover. But now, I bethink me again of my avenging sovereignty! It is the fagot piles about the stake which flame so merrily yonder. And that yelling and clamor indicate that my merry people are enjoying with all their soul, the comedy which I have had played before them to-day, for the honor of God, and my unimpeachable royal dignity. The stake! cried Catharine trembling. Your Majesty does not mean thereby to say that right yonder, men are to die a cruel painful death—that the same hour in which their King pronounces himself happy and content, some of his subject are to be condemned to dreadful torture, to a horrible destruction. Oh, no! my King will not overcloud his Queen's wedding-day with so dark a veil of death. He will not wish to dim my happiness so cruelly.

The King laughed. No, I will not darken it, but light it up with bright flames, said he; and as, with outstretched arm, he pointed over to the glaring heavens, he continued: There are our wedding torches, my Kate, and the most sacred and beautiful which I could find, for they burn to the honor of God and of the King.* And the heavenward flaring flame which carries up the souls of the heretics will give to my God joyous intelligence of his most faithful and obedient son, who, even on the day of his happiness, forgets not his kingly duty, but ever remains the avenging and destroying minister of his God.

He looked frightful as he thus spoke. His countenance, lit up by the fire, had a fierce, threatening expression; his eyes blazed; and a cold, cruel smile played about his thin, firmly pressed lips.

Oh, he knows no pity! murmured Catharine to herself, as in a parox-

* Life of King Henry the Eighth, founded on authentic and original documents. By Patrick Fraser Tytler, Edinburgh, 1837, page 440.

ysm of anguish, she stared at the King, who, in fanatical enthusiasm, was looking over towards the fire, into which, at his command, they were perhaps hurling to a cruel, torturing death, some poor wretch, to the honor of God and the King. No, he knows no pity and no mercy.

Now Henry turned to her, and laying his extended hand softly on the back of her slender neck, he spanned it with his fingers, and whispered in her ear tender words and vows of love.

Catharine trembled. This caress of the King, however harmless in itself, had in it for her something dismal and dreadful. It was the involuntary, instinctive touch of the headsman, who examines the neck of his victim, and searches on it for the place where he will make the stroke. Thus had Anne Boleyn once put her tender white hands about her slender neck, and said to the headsman, brought over from Calais specially for her execution: I pray you strike me well and surely! I have indeed but a slim little neck.* Thus had the King clutched his hand about the neck of Catharine Howard, his fifth wife, when, certain of her infidelity, he had thrust her from himself with fierce execrations, when she would have clung to him. The dark marks of that grip were still visible upon her neck when she laid it on the block.†

And this dreadful twining of his fingers, Catharine must now endure as a caress; at which she must smile, which she must receive with all the appearance of delight.

While he spanned her neck, he whispered in her ear words of tenderness, and bent his face close to her cheeks.

But Catharine heeded not his passionate whispers. She saw nothing save the blood-red hand-writing of fire upon the sky. She heard nothing save the shrieks of the wretched victims.

Mercy, mercy! faltered she. Oh, let this day be a day of festivity for all your subjects! Be merciful, and if you would have me really believe that you love me, grant this first request which I make of you. Grant me the lives of these wretched ones. Mercy, Sire, mercy.

And as if the Queen's supplication had found an echo, suddenly was heard from the chamber a wailing, despairing voice, repeating loudly and in tones of anguish: Mercy, your Majesty, mercy! The King turned round impetuously, and his face assumed a dark, wrathful expression. He fastened his searching eyes on Catharine, as though he would read in her looks, whether she knew who had dared to interrupt their conversation.

But Catharine's countenance expressed unconcealed astonishment. Mercy, mercy! repeated the voice from the interior of the chamber.

The King uttered an angry exclamation, and hastily withdrew from the balcony.

* Tytler, 332. † Leti, vol. 1, page 193.

CHAPTER IV

KING BY THE WRATH OF GOD.

WHO dares interrupt us? cried the King, as with headlong step he returned to the chamber—Who dares speak of mercy?

I dare! said a young lady, who, pale, with distorted features, in frightful agitation, now hastened to the King and prostrated herself before him.

Anne Askew! cried Catharine amazed. Anne, what want you here?

I want mercy, mercy for those wretched ones, who are suffering yonder, cried the young maiden, pointing with an expression of horror to the reddened sky. I want mercy for the King himself, who is so cruel as to send the noblest and best of his subjects to the slaughter like miserable brutes!

Oh, Sire, have compassion on this poor child! besought Catharine, turning to Henry, compassion on her impassioned excitement and her youthful ardor! She is as yet unaccustomed to these frightful scenes: she knows not yet that it is the sad duty of kings to be constrained to punish, where they might prefer to pardon!

Henry smiled; but the look which he cast on the kneeling girl made Catharine tremble. There was a death-warrant in that look!

Anne Askew, if I mistake not, is your second maid of honor? asked the King, and it was at your express wish that she received that place?

Yes, Sire!

You knew her then?

No, Sire! I saw her a few days ago for the first time. But she had already won my heart at our first meeting, and I feel that I shall love her. Exercise forbearance, then, your Majesty!

But the King was still thoughtful, and Catharine's answers did not yet satisfy him.

Why then do you interest yourself for this young lady, if you did not know her?

She has been so warmly recommended to me!

By whom?

Catharine hesitated a moment; she felt that she had perhaps, in her zeal, gone too far, and that it was imprudent to tell the King the truth. But the King's keen, penetrating look was resting on her, and she recollected that he had, the first thing that evening, so urgently and solemnly conjured her to always tell him the truth. Besides it was no secret at Court, who the protector of this young maiden was, and who had been the means of her obtaining the place of maid of honor to the Queen, a

place which so many wealthy and distinguished families had solicited for their daughters.

Who recommended this lady to you? repeated the King, and already his ill-humor began to redden his face and make his voice tremble.

Archbishop Cranmer did so, Sire, said Catharine as she raised her eyes to the King and looked at him with a smile surpassingly charming.

At that moment was heard without, more loudly, the roll of drums, which nevertheless was partially drowned by piercing shrieks and horrible cries of distress. The blaze of the fire shot up higher, and now was seen the bright flame, which with murderous rage licked the sky above.

Anne Askew, who had kept respectful silence during the conversation of the royal pair, now felt herself completely overcome by this horrible sight, and bereft of the last remnant of self-possession.

My God, my God! said she, quivering from the internal tremor, and stretching her hands beseechingly towards the King. Do you not hear that frightful wail of the wretched? Sire, by the thought of your own dying hour, I conjure you have compassion on these miserable beings. Let them not, at least, be thrown alive into the flames. Spare them this last frightful torture!

King Henry cast a wrathful look on the kneeling girl; then strode past her to the door, which led into the adjoining hall, in which the courtiers were waiting for their King.

He beckoned to the two Bishops, Cranmer and Gardiner, to come nearer, and ordered the servants to throw the hall doors wide open.

The scene now afforded an animated and singular spectacle, and this chamber, just before so quiet, was suddenly changed to the theatre of a great drama, which was perhaps to end tragically. In the Queen's bed-chamber, a small room, but furnished with the utmost luxury and splendor, the principal characters of this scene were congregated. In the middle of the space stood the King in his robes, embroidered with gold and sparkling with jewels, which were irradiated by the bright light of the chandelier. Near him was seen the young Queen, whose beautiful and lovely face was turned in anxious expectation towards the King, in whose stern and rigid features she sought to read the development of this scene.

Not far from her, still knelt the young maiden, hiding in her hands her face drenched in tears; while farther away, in the back-ground, were the two Bishops observing with grave, cool tranquility, the group before them. Through the open hall-doors were descried the expectant and curious countenances of the courtiers, standing with their heads crowded close together in the space before the doors; and, opposite to them, through the open door leading to the balcony, was seen the fiery, blazing sky, and heard the clanging of the bells, and the rolling of the drums, the piercing shrieks and the yells of the people.

A deep silence ensued, and when the King spoke, the tone of his voice was so hard and cold, that an involuntary shudder ran through all present.

My Lord Bishops of Winchester and Canterbury, said the King, we have called you that you may, by the might of your prayers, and the wisdom of your words, rid this young girl here from the devil, who, without doubt, has the mastery over her, since she dares charge her King and Master with cruelty and injustice.

The two Bishops drew nearer to the kneeling girl; each laid a hand upon her shoulder, and bent over her, but the one with an expression of countenance wholly different from that of the other.

Cranmer's look was gentle and serious, and at the same time, a compassionate and encouraging smile played about his thin lips.

Gardiner's features on the contrary bore the expression of cruel, cold-hearted irony; and the smile which rested on his thick protruding lips, was the joyful and merciless smile of a priest ready to sacrifice a victim to his idol.

Courage, my daughter, courage and prudence, whispered Cranmer.

God, who blesses the righteous and punishes and destroys sinners, be with thee and with us all, said Gardiner.

But Anne Askew recoiled with a shudder from the touch of his hand, and with an impetuous movement, pushed it away from her shoulder.

Touch me not; you are the hangman of those poor people whom they are putting to death down yonder, said she impetuously; and as she turned to the King and extended her hands imploringly towards him, she cried: Mercy, King Henry, mercy!

Mercy? repeated the King, Mercy? and for whom? Who are they that they are putting to death down there? Tell me forsooth, my Lord Bishops, who are they that are led to the stake to day? Who are the condemned?

They are heretics, who devote themselves to this new false doctrine which has come over to us from Germany, and who dare refuse to recognize the spiritual supremacy of our Lord and King, said Bishop Gardiner.

They are Roman Catholics who regard the Pope of Rome as the chief shepherd of the Church of Christ, and will regard nobody but him as their Lord, said Bishop Cranmer.

Ah, behold this young maiden accuses us of injustice, cried the King; and yet you say, that not heretics alone are executed down there, but also Romanists. It appears to me then that we have justly and impartially, as always, punished only criminals and given over the guilty to justice.

Oh, had you seen what I have seen, said Anne Askew shuddering, then would you collect all your vital energies for a single cry, for a single word—Mercy! and that word would you shout out loud enough to reach yon frightful place of torture and horror.

What saw you then? asked the King, smiling.

Anne Askew had stood up, and her tall slender form now lifted itself, like a lily, between the sombre forms of the Bishops. Her eye was fixed and glaring; her noble and delicate features bore the expression of horror and dread.

I saw, said she, a woman whom they were leading to execution. Not a criminal, but a noble lady, whose proud and lofty heart never harbored a thought of treason or disloyalty ; but who, true to her faith and her convictions, would not forswear the God whom she served. As she passed through the crowd, it seemed as if a halo encompassed her head, and covered her white hair with silvery rays ; all bowed before her, and the hardest natures wept over the unfortunate woman who had lived more than seventy years and yet was not allowed to die in her bed, but was to be slaughtered to the glory of God and of the King. But she smiled ; and graciously saluting the weeping and sobbing multitude, she advanced to the scaffold as if she were ascending a throne to receive the homage of her people. Two years of imprisonment had blanched her cheek, but had not been able to destroy the fire of her eye, or the strength of her mind, and seventy years had not bowed her neck or broken her spirit. Proud and firm, she mounted the steps of the scaffold, and once more saluted the people and cried aloud : " I will pray to God for you." But as the headsman approached and demanded that she should allow her hands to be bound, and that she should kneel in order to lay her head upon the block, she refused, and angrily pushed him away. " Only traitors and criminals lay their head on the block," exclaimed she, with a loud thundering voice. " There is no occasion for me to do so, and I will not submit to your bloody laws as long as there is a breath in me. Take then my life if you can."

And now began a scene which filled the hearts of the lookers-on with fear and horror. The Countess flew like a hunted beast round and round the scaffold. Her white hair streamed in the wind ; her black grave clothes rustled around her like a dark cloud, and behind her, with uplifted axe, came the headsman, in his fiery red dress ; he, ever endeavoring to strike her with the falling axe—but she, ever trying by moving her head to and fro to evade the descending stroke. But at length her resistance became weaker ; the blows of the axe reached her, and stained her white hair, hanging loose about her shoulders, with crimson streaks. With a heart-rending cry she fell fainting. Near her, exhausted also, sank down the headsman, bathed in sweat. This horrible wild chase had lamed his arm and broken his strength. Panting and breathless he was not able to drag this fainting, bleeding woman to the block, or to lift up the axe to separate her noble head from the body.* The crowd shrieked with distress and horror, imploring and begging for mercy, and even the Lord Chief Justice could not refrain from tears, and he ordered the cruel work to be suspended until the Countess and the headsman should have regained strength ; for a living, not a dying person was to be executed : thus said the law. They made a pallet for the Countess on the scaffold and endeavored to restore her ; invigorating wine was supplied to the headsman to renew his strength for the work of death, and the crowd turned to the stakes which were prepared on both sides of the scaffold, and at which four other martyrs were to be burnt. But I flew here like

* Tytler, page 430.

a hunted doe, and now, King, I lie at your feet. There is still time. Pardon, King, pardon for the Countess of Sommerset, the last of the Plantagenets.

Pardon, Sire, pardon! repeated Catharine Parr, weeping and trembling as she clung to her husband's side.

Pardon! repeated Archbishop Cranmer, and a few of the courtiers echoed it in a timid and anxious whisper.

The King's large brilliant eyes glanced around the whole assembly, with a quick penetrating look.

And you, my Lord Bishop Gardiner, asked he, in a cold sarcastic tone; will you also ask for mercy, like all these weak-hearted souls here?

The Lord our God is a jealous God, said Gardiner, solemnly, and it is written that God will punish the sinner unto the third and fourth generation.

And what is written shall stand true, exclaimed the King, in a voice of thunder. No mercy for evil-doers, no pity for criminals. The axe must fall upon the head of the guilty, the flames shall consume the bodies of criminals.

Sire, think of your high vocation! exclaimed Anne Askew, in a tone of enthusiasm. Reflect what a glorious name you have assumed to yourself in this land. You call yourself the head of the Church, and you want to rule and govern upon earth in God's stead! Exercise mercy, then, for you entitle yourself King by the grace of God.

No, I do not call myself King by God's grace. I call myself King by God's wrath! exclaimed Henry, as he raised his arm menacingly. It is my duty to send sinners to God; may He have mercy on them there above, if He will! I am the punishing judge, and I judge mercilessly according to the law, without compassion! Let those whom I have condemned appeal to God, and may He have mercy upon them. I cannot do it, nor will I. Kings are here to punish, and they are like to God, not in his love, but in his avenging wrath.

Woe, then, woe to you and to all of us! exclaimed Anne Askew, woe to you, King Henry, if what you now say is the truth. Then are they right, those men who are bound to yonder stakes, when they brand you with the name of tyrant—then is the Bishop of Rome right when he upbraids you as an apostate and degenerate son, and hurls his anathemas against you! Then you know not God who is love and mercy—then you are no disciple of the Saviour who has said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you." Woe to you, King Henry, if matters are really so bad with you; if—

Silence, unhappy woman, silence! exclaimed Catharine, and as she vehemently pushed away the furious girl, she grasped the King's hand and pressed it to her lips.

Sire, whispered she with intense earnestness; Sire, you told me just now, that you loved me. Prove it by pardoning this maiden and having consideration for her impassioned excitement. Prove it by allowing me to lead Anne Askew to her room and enjoin silence upon her!

But at this moment the King was wholly inaccessible to any other feelings than those of anger and delight in blood.

He indignantly repelled Catharine, and without moving his sharp, penetrating look from the young maiden, he said in a quick, hollow tone :
 • let her alone ! let her speak ! let no one dare to interrupt her !

Catharine, trembling with anxiety and inwardly hurt at the harsh manner of the King, retired with a sigh to the embrasure of one of the windows.

Anne Askew had not noticed what was going on about her. She remained in that state of exaltation which cares for no consequences and which trembles before no danger. She would at this moment have gone to the stake with cheerful alacrity, and she almost longed for this blessed martyrdom.

Speak, Anne Askew, speak ! commanded the King. Tell me, do you know what the Countess, for whose pardon you are beseeching me, has done ? Know you why those four men were sent to the stake ?

I do know, King Henry by the wrath of God, said the maiden, with burning passionateness. I know why you have sent the noble Countess to the slaughter house, and why you will exercise no mercy towards her. She is of noble, of royal blood, and Cardinal Pole is her son. You would punish the son through the mother, and because you cannot throttle the Cardinal, you murder his mother.

Oh, you are a very knowing child ! cried the King, with an inhuman, ironical laugh. You know my most secret thoughts and my most hidden feelings. Without doubt you are a good papist, since the death of the popish Countess fills you with such heart rending grief. Then you must confess, at the least, that it is right to burn the four heretics !

Heretics ! exclaimed Anne, enthusiastically, call you heretics those noble men, who go gladly and boldly to death for their convictions and their faith ? King Henry ! King Henry ! Woe to you, if these men are condemned as heretics. They alone are the faithful, they are the true servants of God. They have freed themselves from human supremacy, and as you would not recognize the Pope, so they will not recognize you, as head of the Church ! God alone, they say, is Lord of the Church and Master of their consciences, and who can be presumptuous enough to call them criminals ?

I ! exclaimed Henry the Eighth in a powerful tone. I dare do it. I say that they are heretics and that I will destroy them, will tread them all beneath my feet, all of them, all who think as they do ! I say that I will shed the blood of these criminals, and prepare for them torments at which human nature will shudder and quake. God will manifest himself by me in fire and blood ! He has put the sword into my hand and I will wield it for his glory. Like St. George, I will tread the dragon of heresy beneath my feet !

And haughtily raising his crimsoned face and rolling his great blood-shot eyes wildly around the circle, he continued : Hear this, all of you who are here assembled ; no mercy for heretics, no pardon for papists,

It is I, I alone, whom the Lord our God has chosen and blessed as his hangman and executioner! I am the high-priest of his Church, and he who dares deny me, denies God; and he, who is so presumptuous as to do reverence to any other head of the Church, is a priest of Baal and kneels to an idolatrous image. Kneel down all of you before me and reverence in me God, whose earthly representative I am, and who reveals himself through me in his fearful and exalted majesty. Kneel down, for I am sole head of the Church and high priest of our God!

And as if at one blow all knees bent, all those haughty cavaliers, those ladies sparkling with jewels and gold, even the two Bishops and the Queen fell upon the ground.

The King gazed for a moment on this sight, and with radiant looks and a smile of triumph, his eyes ran over this assembly, consisting of the noblest of his kingdom, humbled before him.

Suddenly they were fastened on Anne Askew.

She alone had not bent her knee, but stood in the midst of the kneelers, proud and upright as the King himself.

A dark cloud passed over the King's countenance.

You obey not my command? asked he.

She shook her curly head and fixed on him a steady piercing look. No, said she, like those over yonder, whose last death-groan we even now hear, like them, I say: To God alone is honor due, and He alone is Lord of his Church! If you wish me to bend my knee before you, as my King, I will do it, but I bow not to you as the head of Holy Church!

A murmur of surprise flew through the assembly, and every eye was turned with fear and amazement on this bold young girl, who confronted the King with a countenance smiling and glowing with enthusiasm.

At a sign from Henry, the kneelers arose and awaited in breathless silence the terrible scene that was coming.

A pause ensued. King Henry himself was struggling for breath and needed a moment to collect himself.

Not as though wrath and passion had deprived him of speech. He was neither wrathful, nor passionate, and it was only *joy* that obstructed his breathing—the joy of having again found a victim with which he might satisfy his desire for blood, on whose agony he might feast his eyes, whose dying sigh he might greedily inhale.

The King was never more cheerful than when he had signed a death-warrant. For then he was in full enjoyment of his greatness as lord over the lives and deaths of millions of other men, and this feeling made him proud and happy, and fully conscious of his exalted position.

Hence as he now turned to Anne Askew, his countenance was calm and serene, and his voice friendly, almost tender.

Anne Askew, said he, do you know that the words you have now spoken make you guilty of high treason?

I know it, Sire.

And you know what punishment awaits traitors?

Death, I know it.

Death by fire! said the King with perfect calmness and composure. A hollow murmur ran through the assembly. Only one voice dared utterance to the word Mercy.

It was Catharine, the King's consort who spoke this one word. She stepped forward, and was about to rush to the King and once more implore his mercy and pity. But she felt herself gently held back. Archbishop Cranmer stood near her regarding her with a serious and beseeching look.

Compose yourself, compose yourself, murmured he. You cannot save her; she is lost. Think of yourself, and of the pure and holy religion whose protectress you are. Preserve yourself for your Church and your companions in the faith!

And must she die? asked Catharine, whose eyes filled with tears as she looked towards that poor young child, who was confronting the King with a such a beautiful and innocent smile.

Perhaps we may still save her, but this is not the moment for it. Any opposition now would only irritate the King the more, and he might cause the girl to be instantly thrown into the flames of the fires still burning yonder! So let us be silent.

Yes, silence; murmured Catharine, with a shudder, as she withdrew again to the embrasure of the window.

Death by fire awaits you, Anne Askew! repeated the King. No mercy for the traitoress who villifies and scoffs at her King!

CHAPTER V.

THE RIVALS.

At the very moment when the King was pronouncing, in a voice almost exultant, Anne Askew's sentence of death, one of the King's cavaliers appeared on the threshold of the royal chamber and advanced towards the King.

He was a young man of noble and imposing appearance, whose lofty bearing contrasted strangely with the humble and submissive attitude of the rest of the courtiers. His tall, slim form was clad in a coat of mail glittering with gold; over his shoulders hung a velvet mantle decorated with a princely crown, and his head, covered with dark ringlets, was adorned with a cap embroidered with gold, from which a long white ostrich feather drooped to his shoulder. His oval face presented the full type of aristocratic beauty; his cheeks were of a clear, transparent paleness; about his slightly pouting mouth played a smile, half con-

temptuous and half languid; the high arched brow and delicately chiseled aquiline nose gave to his face an expression at once bold and thoughtful. The eyes alone were not in harmony with his face; they were neither languid, like the mouth, nor pensive, like the brow. All the fire and all the bold and wanton passion of youth shot from those dark flashing eyes. When he looked down, he might have been taken for a completely worn out, misanthropic aristocrat; but when he raised those ever flashing and sparkling eyes, then was seen the young man full of dashing courage and ambitious desires, of passionate warmth and measureless pride.

He approached the King, as already stated, and as he bent his knee before him, he said, in a full, pleasant voice: Mercy. Sire, Mercy!

The King stepped back in astonishment, and turned upon the bold speaker a look almost of amazement.

Thomas Seymour! said he. Thomas, you have returned, then, and your first act is again an indiscretion and a piece of foolhardy rashness?

The young man smiled. I have returned, said he, that is to say, I have had a sea-fight with the Scots and taken from them four men of war. With these I hastened hither to present them to you, my King and Lord, as a wedding gift, and just as I entered the ante-room I heard your voice pronouncing a sentence of death. Was it not natural, then, that I, who bring you tidings of a victory, should have the heart to utter a prayer for mercy, for which, as it seems, none of these noble and proud cavaliers could summon up courage?

Ah! said the King, evidently relieved and fetching a deep breath, then you knew not at all for whom and for what you were imploring pardon?

Yet! said the young man, and his bold glance ran with an expression of contempt over the whole assembly. Yet, I saw at once who the condemned must be, for I saw this young maiden forsaken by all as if stricken by the plague, standing alone in the midst of this exalted and brave company. And you well know, my noble King, that at Court one recognizes the condemned and those fallen into disgrace by this, that every one flies from them, and nobody has the courage to touch such a leper even with the tip of his finger.

King Henry smiled. Thomas Seymour, Earl of Sudley, you are now, as ever, imprudent and hasty, said he. You beg for mercy without once knowing whether she, for whom you beg it, is worthy of mercy.

But I see that she is a woman, said the intrepid young Earl. And a woman is always worthy of mercy, and it becomes every knight to come forward as her defender, were it but to pay homage to her sex, so fair and so frail, and yet so noble and mighty. Therefore I beg mercy for this young maiden!

Catharine had listened to the young Earl with throbbing heart and flushed cheeks. It was the first time that she had seen him, and yet she felt for him a warm sympathy, an almost tender anxiety.

He will plunge himself into ruin murmured she ; he will not save Anne, but make himself unhappy. My God, my God, have a little compassion and pity on my anguish !

She now fixed her anxious gaze on the King, firmly resolved to rush to the help of the Earl, who had so nobly and magnanimously interested himself in an innocent woman, should the wrath of her husband threaten him also. But to her surprise, Henry's face was perfectly serene and contented.

Like the wild beast, that, following its instinct, seeks its bloody prey only so long as it is hungry, so King Henry felt satiated for the day. Yonder glared the fires about the stake at which four heretics were burned ; there stood the scaffold on which the Countess of Somerset had just been executed, and now within this hour he had already found another new victim for death.

Moreover, Thomas Seymour had always been his favorite. His audacity, his liveliness, his energy, had always inspired the King with respect ; and then, again, he so much resembled his sister, the beautiful Jane Seymour, Henry's third wife.

I cannot grant you this favor, Thomas, said the King. Justice must not be hindered in her course, and where she has passed sentence, mercy must not give her the lie ; and it was the justice of your King which pronounced sentence at that moment. You were guilty, therefore, of a double wrong, for you not only besought mercy, but you also brought an accusation against my cavaliers. Do you really believe that, were this maiden's cause a just one, no knight would have been found for her ?

Yes, I really believe it, cried the Earl, with a laugh. The sun of your favor had turned away from this poor girl, and in such a case your courtiers no longer see the figure wrapped in darkness.

You are mistaken, my Lord, I have seen it, suddenly said another voice, and a second cavalier advanced from the anteroom into the chamber. He approached the King, and, as he bent his knee before him, he said in a loud, steady voice : Sire, I also beg mercy for Anne Askew !

At this moment was heard from that side of the room where the ladies stood a low cry, and the pale, affrighted face of Lady Jane Douglas was for a moment raised above the heads of the other ladies.

No one noticed it. All eyes were directed towards the group in the middle of the room ; all looked with eager attention upon the King and these two young men, who dared protect one whom he had sentenced.

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey ! exclaimed the King ; and now an expression of wrath passed over his countenance. How, you too, dare intercede for this girl ? You, then, grudge Thomas Seymour the pre-eminence of being the most indiscreet man at my Court ?

I will not allow him, Sire, to think that he is the bravest, replied the young man, as he fixed on Thomas Seymour a look of haughty defiance, which the other answered by a cold, disdainful smile.

Oh, said he, with a shrug of his shoulders, I willingly allow you, my

dear Earl of Surrey, to tread behind me, at your convenience, the path, the safety of which I first tested at the peril of my life. You saw that I had not as yet lost either my head or my life in this reckless undertaking, and that has given you courage to follow my example. That is a new proof of your *prudent* valor, my Honorable Earl of Surrey, and I must praise you for it!

A hot flush suffused the noble face of the Earl. his eyes shot lightning, and, trembling with rage, he laid his hand on his sword.

Praise from Thomas Seymour is—

Silence! interrupted the King imperatively. It must not be said that two of the noblest cavaliers of my Court have turned the day, which should be one of festivity to all of you, into a day of contention. I command you, therefore, to be reconciled. Shake hands, my Lords, and let your reconciliation be sincere. I, the King, command it!

The young men gazed at each other with looks of hatred and smothered rage, and their eyes spoke the insulting and defiant words which their lips durst no longer utter.

The King had ordered, and however great and powerful they might be, the King was to be obeyed.

They, therefore, extended their hands to each other and muttered a few low, unintelligible words, which might be perhaps a mutual apology, but which neither of them understood.

And now, Sire, said the Earl of Surrey, now I venture to reiterate my prayer. Mercy, your Majesty, mercy for Anne Askew.

And you, Thomas Seymour, do you also renew you petition?

No, I withdraw it. Earl Surrey protects her; I, therefore, retire, for without doubt she is a criminal; your Majesty says so, and, therefore, it is so! It would ill become a Seymour to protect a person who has sinned against the King.

This new indirect attack on Earl Surrey seemed to make on all present a deep but very varied impression. Here, faces were seen to turn pale, and there, to light up with a malicious smile; here, compressed lips muttered words of threatening, there, a mouth opened to express approbation and agreement.

The King's brow was clouded and troubled; the arrow, which Earl Sudley had shot with so skillful a hand, had hit. The King, ever suspicious and distrustful, felt so much the more disquieted, as he saw that the greater part of his cavaliers evidently reckoned themselves friends of Henry Howard, and that the number of Seymour's adherents was but trifling.

These Howards are dangerous and I will watch them carefully, said the King to himself, and for the first time his eye rested with a dark and hostile look on Henry Howard's noble countenance.

But Thomas Seymour, who wished only to make a thrust at his old enemy, had at the same time decided the fate of poor Anne Askew.

It was now almost an impossibility to speak in her behalf; and to implore pardon for her was to become a partaker of her crime.

Thomas Seymour had abandoned her, because, as traitoress to her king, she had rendered herself unworthy of his protection. Who now would be so presumptuous as to still protect the traitoress?

Henry Howard did it. He reiterated his supplication for Anne Askew's pardon. But the King's countenance grew darker and darker, and the courtiers watched with dread the coming of the moment when his wrath would dash in pieces the poor Earl of Surrey.

In the row of ladies also, here and there, a pale face was visible, and many a beautiful and beaming eye was dimmed with tears, at the sight of this gallant and handsome cavalier, who was hazarding even his life for a woman.

He is lost! murmured Lady Jane Douglas, and completely crushed and lifeless, she leant for a moment against the wall. But she soon recovered herself and her eye beamed with bold resolution.

I will try and save him! she said to herself; and, with firm step, she advanced from the ladies' ranks and approached the King.

A murmur of applause ran through the company, and all faces brightened and all eyes were bent approvingly on Lady Jane.

They knew that she was the Queen's friend and an adherent of the new doctrine, it was, therefore, very marked and significant, when she supported the Earl of Surrey in his magnanimous effort.

Lady Jane bowed her beautiful and haughty head before the King, and said in her clear, silvery voice: Sire! in the name of all the women, I also beseech you to pardon Anne Askew, because she is a woman. Lord Surrey has done so, because a true knight can never be false to himself and his ever high and sacred obligation: to be the protector of those who are helpless and in peril, is enough for him. A real gentleman asks not whether a woman is worthy of his protection; he grants it to her, simply because she is a woman, and needs his help. And while I, therefore, in the name of all the women, thank the Earl of Surrey for the assistance that he has been desirous to render to a woman, I unite my prayer with his, because it shall not be said that we women are always cowardly and timid, and never venture to hasten to the help of the distressed. I, therefore, ask mercy, Sire, mercy for Anne Askew!

And I, said the Queen, as she again approached the King; I add my prayers to hers, Sire! To-day is the feast of love, *my* festival, Sire! To-day, then, let love and mercy prevail.

She looked at the King with so charming a smile, her eyes had an expression so radiant and happy, that the King could not withstand her.

He was, therefore, in the depths of his heart, ready to let the royal clemency prevail for this time; but he wanted a pretext for this, some way of bringing it about. He had solemnly vowed to pardon no heretic, and he might not break his word merely because the Queen prayed for mercy.

Well, then, said he, after a pause, I will comply with your request.

I will pardon Anne Askew, provided she will retract and solemnly abjure all that she has said. Are you satisfied with that, Catharine?

I am satisfied! said she sadly.

And you, Lady Jane Douglas and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey?

We are satisfied!

All eyes were now turned again upon Anne Askew, who, although every one was occupied by her concerns, had been entirely overlooked and left unnoticed.

Nor had she taken any more notice of the company than they of her. She had scarcely observed what was going on about her.

She stood leaning against the open door leading to the balcony, and gazed at the flaming horizon. Her soul was with those pious martyrs, for whom she was sending up her heartfelt prayers to God, and whom she, in her feverish exaltation, envied their death of torture.

Entirely borne away from the present, she had heard neither the petitions of those who protected her, nor the King's reply.

A hand laid upon her shoulder roused her from her reverie.

It was Catharine, the young Queen, who stood near her.

Anne Askew, said she in a hurried whisper, if your life is dear to you, comply with the King's demand.

She seized the young girl's hand and led her to the King.

Sire, said she, in a full voice, forgive the exalted and impassioned agony of a poor girl, who has now, for the first time, been witness of an execution, and whose mind has been so much impressed by it that she is scarcely conscious of the mad and criminal words that she has uttered before you! Pardon her, then, your Majesty, for she is prepared cheerfully to retract.

A try of amazement burst from Anne's lips, and her eyes flashed with anger, as she dashed the Queen's hand away from her.

I retract? exclaimed she, with a contemptuous smile. Never! my Lady, never! No! As sure as I hope for God to be gracious to me in my last hour, I retract not! It is true, it was agony and horror that made me speak; but what I have spoken, is yet, nevertheless, the truth. Horror caused me to speak, and forced me to show my soul undisguised. No, I retract not! I tell you, they who have been executed over yonder, are holy martyrs, who have ascended to God, there to enter an accusation against their royal hangman. Aye, they are holy, for eternal truth had illumined their souls, and it beamed about their faces bright as the flames of the fagots into which the murderous hand of an unrighteous judge had cast them. Ah, I must retract! I, forsooth, am to do as did Shaxton, the miserable and unfaithful servant of his God, who, from fear of earthly death, denied the eternal truth, and in blaspheming pusillanimity perjured himself concerning the holy doctrine.* King Henry, I say unto you, beware of dissemblers and perjurers; beware of your own haughty and arrogant thoughts. The blood of martyrs cries to Heaven against you, and the time will come when God

*Burnet, vol. 1, page 341.

will be as merciless to you as you have been to the noblest of your subjects! You deliver them over to the murderous flames, because they will not believe what the Priests of Baal preach; because they will not believe in the real transubstantiation of the chalice; because they deny that the natural body of Christ is, after sacrament, contained in the sacrament, no matter whether the priest be a good or a bad man.* You give them over to the executioner, because they serve the truth, and are faithful followers of the Lord their God!

And you share the views of these people, whom you call martyrs? asked the King, as Anne Askew now paused for a moment and struggled for breath.

Yes, I share them!

You deny, then, the truth of the Six Articles?

I deny them!

You do not see in me the head of the Church?

God only is Head and Lord of the Church!

A pause followed, a fearful, awful pause.

Every one felt that for this poor young girl there was no hope, no possible escape; that her doom was irrevocably sealed.

There was a smile on the King's countenance.

The courtiers knew that smile, and feared it yet more than the King's raging wrath.

When the King thus smiled, he had taken his resolve. Then there was with him no possible vacillation or hesitation, but the sentence of death was resolved on, and his bloodthirsty soul rejoiced over a new victim.

My Lord Bishop of Winchester, said the King, at length, come hither.

Gardiner drew near and placed himself by Anne Askew, who gazed at him with angry, contemptuous looks.

In the name of the law, I command you to arrest this heretic, and hand her over to the Spiritual Court, continued the King. She is damned and lost. She shall be punished as she deserves!

Gardiner laid his hand on Anne Askew's shoulder. In the name of the law of God, I arrest you! said he, solemnly.

Not a word more was spoken. The Lord Chief Justice had silently followed a sign from Gardiner, and touching Anne Askew with his staff, ordered the soldiers to conduct her thence.

With a smile, Anne Askew offered them her hand, and, surrounded by the soldiers and followed by the Bishop of Winchester and the Lord Chief Justice, walked erect and proudly out of the room.

The courtiers had divided and opened a passage for Anne and her attendants. Now their ranks closed again, as the sea closes and flows calmly on when it has just received a corpse.

To them all, Anne Askew was already a corpse, as one buried. The waves had swept over her and all was again serene and bright.

The King extended his hand to his young wife, and, bending down,

whispered in her ear a few words, which nobody understood, but which made the young Queen tremble and blush.

The King, who observed this, laughed and impressed a kiss on her forehead. Then he turned to his Court :

Now, good night, by Lords and gentlemen, said he, with a gracious inclination of the head. The feast is at an end, and we need rest.

Forget not the Princess Elizabeth, whispered Archbishop Cranmer, as he took leave of Catharine and pressed to his lips her proffered hand.

I will not forget her, murmured Catharine, and with throbbing heart and trembling with inward dread, she saw them all retire, and leave her alone with the King.

CHAPTER VI.

THE INTERCESSION.

AND NOW, Kate, said the King, when all had withdrawn, and he was again alone with her, now let us forget everything, save that we love each other.

He embraced her and with ardor pressed her to his breast. Wearied to death she bowed her head on his shoulder and lay there, like a shattered rose, completely broken, completely passive.

You give me no kiss, Kate? said Henry, with a smile. Are you then yet angry with me, that I did not comply with your first request? But what would you have me do, child? How indeed shall I keep the crimson of my royal mantle always fresh and bright, unless I continually dye it anew in the blood of criminals? Only he who punishes and destroys is truly a king, and trembling mankind will acknowledge him as such. The tender-hearted and gracious king it despises, and his pitiful weakness it laughs to scorn. Bah! Humanity is such a wretched, miserable thing, that it only respects and acknowledges him who makes it tremble. And people are such contemptible, foolish children, that they have respect only for him who makes them feel the lash daily, and every now and then, whips a few of them to death. Look at me, Kate; where is there a king who has reigned longer and more happily than I? Whom the people love more and obey better than me? This arises from the fact, that I have already signed more than two hundred death warrants,* and because every one believes that, if he does not obey me, I will without delay send his head after the others!

Oh, you say you love me, murmured Catharine, and you speak only of blood and death while you are with me.

* *Tyler*, 423. *Leti*, vol. 1, page 187.

The King laughed. You are right, Kate, said he, and yet, believe me, there are other thoughts slumbering in the depths of my heart, and could you look down into it, you would not accuse me of coldness and unkindness. I love you truly, my dear, virgin bride, and to prove it, you shall now ask a favor of me. Yes, Kate, make me a request, and whatever it may be, I pledge you my royal word, it shall be granted you. Now, Kate, think, what will please you? Will you have brilliants, or a castle by the sea, or, perhaps, a yacht? Would you like fine horses, or it may be some one has offended you, and you would like his head? If so, tell me, Kate, and you shall have his head; a wink from me and it drops at your feet. For I am almighty and all powerful, and no one is so innocent and pure, that my will cannot find in him a crime, which will cost him his life. Speak then, Kate; what would you have? What will gladden your heart?

Catharine smiled in spite of her secret fear and horror.

Sire, said she, you have given me so many brilliants, that I can shine and glitter with them, as night does with her stars. If you give me a castle by the sea, that is at the same time, banishing me from Whitehall and your presence; I wish, therefore, for no castle of my own. I wish only to dwell with you in your castles, and my King's abode shall be my only residence.

Beautifully and wisely spoken, said the King. I will remember these words if ever your enemies endeavor to send you to a dwelling and a castle other than that which your King occupies. The Tower is also a castle, Kate, but I give you my royal word, you shall never occupy that castle. You want no treasures, and no castles? It is then somebody's head that you demand of me?

Yes, Sire, it is the head of some one!

Ah, I guessed it then, said the King with a laugh. Now speak, my little blood-thirsty Queen, whose head will you have? Who shall be brought to the block?

Sire, it is true I ask you for the head of a person, said Catharine, in a tender, earnest tone, but I wish not that head to fall, but to be lifted up. I beg you for a human life, but not to destroy it, but on the contrary to adorn it with happiness and joy. I wish to drag no one to prison, but to restore to one, dearly beloved, the freedom, happiness and splendid position which belong to her. Sire, you have permitted me to ask a favor. Now, then, I beg you to call the Princess Elizabeth to Court. Let her reside with us at Whitehall. Allow her to be ever near me and share my happiness and glory. Sire, only yesterday the Princess Elizabeth was far above me in rank and position, but since your all-powerful might and grace has to-day elevated me above all other women, I may now love the Princess Elizabeth as my sister and dearest friend. Grant me this, my King! Let Elizabeth come to us at Whitehall and enjoy at our Court the honor which is her due.*

The King did not reply immediately. But in his quiet and smiling

* Lett, vol. 1, 147. Triller, 410.

air one could read that his young consort's request had not angered him.

Something like an emotion flitted across his face, and his eyes were for a moment dimmed with tears.

Perhaps just then a pale, soul-harrowing phantom passed before his mind, and a glance at the past showed him the beautiful and unfortunate mother* of Elizabeth, whom he had sentenced to a cruel death at the hands of the public executioner, and whose last word nevertheless was a blessing and a message of love for him.

He passionately seized Catharine's hand and pressed it to his lips. I thank you! You are unselfish and generous. That is a very rare quality, and I shall always highly esteem you for it. But you are also brave and courageous, for you have dared, what nobody before you has dared; you have twice on the same evening interceded for one condemned and one fallen into disgrace. The fortunate, and those favored by me, have always had many friends, but I have never yet seen, that the unfortunate and the exiled have also found friends. You are different from these miserable, cringing courtiers, different from this deceitful and trembling crowd, that with chattering teeth fall down and worship me as their god and lord; different from these pitiful, good-for-nothing mortals, who call themselves my people, and who allow me to yoke them up, because they are like the ox, which is obedient and serviceable, only because he is so stupid as not to know his own might and strength. Ah, believe me, Kate, I would be a milder and more merciful king, if the people were not such an utterly stupid and contemptible thing; a dog, which is so much the more submissive and gentle the more you maltreat him. You, Kate, you are different, and I am glad of it. You know, I have forever banished Elizabeth from my Court and from my heart, and still you intercede for her. That is noble of you, and I love you for it, and grant you your request. And that you may see how I love and trust you, I will now reveal to you a secret: I have long since wished to have Elizabeth with me, but I was ashamed, even to myself, of this weakness. I have long yearned once again to look into my daughter's large deep eyes, to be a kind and tender father to her, and make some amends to her for the wrong I perhaps may have done to her mother. For sometimes, in sleepless nights, Anne's beautiful face comes up before me and gazes at me with mournful, mild look, and my whole heart shudders before it. But I could not confess this to anybody, for then they might say, that I repented what I had done. A king must be infallible, like God himself, and never, through regret or desire to compensate, confess that he is a weak, erring mortal, like others. You see why I repressed my longing and parental tenderness, which was suspected by no one, and appeared to be a heartless father, because nobody would help me and make it easy for me to be a tender father. Ah, these courtiers! They are so stupid that they can understand only just what is echoed in our words; but what our heart says, and longs for, of that they know nothing. But you know, Kate, you are an acute

woman, and a high minded one besides. Come, Kate, a thankful father gives you this kiss, and this, ay this, your husband gives you, my beautiful charming queen.

CHAPTER VII.

HENRY THE EIGHTH AND HIS WIVES.

THE calm of night had now succeeded to the tempest of the day, and after so much bustle, festivity and rejoicing, deep quiet now reigned in the palace of Whitehall, and throughout London. The happy subjects of King Henry might, without danger, remain for a few hours at least in their houses, and behind closed shutters and bolted doors, either slumber and dream, or give themselves to their devotional exercises, on account of which, they had that day, perhaps, been denounced as malefactors. They might, for a few hours, resign themselves to the sweet blissful dream of being freemen untrammelled in belief and thought. For King Henry slept, and likewise Gardiner and the Lord Chancellor had closed their watchful, prying, devout, murderous eyes, and reposed awhile from the Christian employment of ferreting out heretics.

And like the King, the entire households of both their Majesties were also asleep and resting from the festivities of the royal wedding day, which, in pomp and splendor, by far surpassed the five preceding marriages.

It appeared, however, as though not all the Court officials were taking rest, and following the example of the King. For in a chamber not far from that of the royal pair, one could perceive, from the bright beams streaming from the windows, in spite of the heavy damask curtains which veiled them, that the lights were not yet extinguished; and he who looked more closely, would have observed that now and then a human shadow was portrayed upon the curtain.

So the occupant of this chamber had not yet gone to rest, and harassing must have been the thoughts which caused him to move so restlessly to and fro.

This chamber was occupied by Lady Jane Douglas, first maid of honor to the Queen. The powerful influence of Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, had seconded Catharine's wish to have near her the dear friend of her youth, and without suspecting it, the Queen had given a helping hand to bring nearer to their accomplishment the schemes which the hypocritical Gardiner was directing against her.

For Catharine knew not what changes had taken place in the charac-

tor of her friend in the four years in which she had not seen her. She did not suspect how fatal her sojourn in the strongly Romish city of Dublin had been to the easily impressible mind of her early playmate, and how much it had transformed her whole being.

Lady Jane, once so sprightly and gay, had become a bigoted Romanist, who, with fanatical zeal, believed that she was serving God when she served the Church and paid unreserved obedience to her priests.

Lady Jane Douglas had, therefore, thanks to her fanaticism and the teachings of the priests, become a complete dissimuler. She could smile, while in her heart she secretly brooded over hatred and revenge. She could kiss the lips of those whose destruction she had perhaps just sworn. She could preserve a harmless, innocent air, while she observed everything, and took notice of every breath, every smile, every movement of the eyelashes.

Hence it was very important for Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, to bring this "friend" of the Queen to Court and make of this disciple of Loyola, an ally and friend.

Lady Jane Douglas was alone; and pacing up and down her room, she thought over the events of the day.

Now, that no one was observing her, she had laid aside that gentle, serious mein, which one was wont to see about her at other times; her countenance betrayed, in rapid changes, all the various, sad and cheerful, tempestuous and tender feelings which agitated her.

She who had hitherto had only *one* aim before her eyes, to serve the Church, and to consecrate her whole life to this service; she whose heart had been hitherto open only to ambition and devotion, she felt to-day wholly new, and never suspected feelings springing up within her. A new thought had entered into her life, the woman was awakened in her, and beat violently at that heart, which devotion had overlaid with a hard coating.

She had tried to collect herself in prayer, and to fill her soul so entirely with the idea of God and her Church, that no earthly thought or desire could find place therein. But ever and again arose before her mind's eye the noble countenance of Henry Howard, ever and again she fancied that she heard his earnest, melodious voice, which made her heart shake and tremble like a magical incantation.

She had at first struggled against these sweet fancies, which forced upon her such strange and undreamt-of thoughts, but at length the woman in her got the better of the fanatical Romanist, and dropping into a seat she surrendered herself to her dreams and fancies.

Has he recognized me? asked she to herself. Does he still remember that a year ago we saw each other daily at the King's Court in Dublin?

But no, added she mournfully, he knows nothing of it. He had then eyes and sense only for his young wife. Ah, and she was beautiful and lovely as one of the Graces. But I, am not I also beautiful? and have not the noblest cavaliers paid me homage, and sighed for me in unavail-

ing love? How comes it then, that where I would please, there I am always overlooked? How comes it, that the only two men, for whose notice I ever cared, have never shown any preference for me? I felt that I loved Henry Howard, but this love was a sin, for the Earl of Surrey was married. I therefore tore my heart from him by violence, and gave it to God, because the only man, whom I could love, did not return my affection.—But even God and devotion are not able to entirely fill a woman's heart. In my breast, there was still room for ambition, and since I could not be a happy wife, I would at least be a powerful queen. Oh, every thing was so well devised, so nicely arranged! Gardiner had already spoken of me to the King and inclined him to his plan, and while I was hastening at his call from Dublin hither, this little Catharine Parr comes between and snatches him from me, and overturns all our schemes. I will never forgive her. I will find a way to avenge myself. I will force her to leave this place, which belongs to me, and if there is no other way for it, she must go the way of the scaffold, as did Catharine Howard. I will be Queen of England, I will——

She suddenly interrupted her soliloquy and listened. She thought she heard a slight knock at the door.

She was not mistaken; this knock was now repeated, and indeed with a peculiar significant stroke.

It is my father! said Lady Jane, and as she resumed again her grave and quiet air, she proceeded to open the door.

Ah, you expected me, then? said Lord Archibald Douglas, kissing his daughter's forehead.

Yes, I expected you, my father, replied Lady Jane with a smile. I knew that you would come to communicate to me your experiences and observations during the day, and to give me directions for the future.

The Earl seated himself on the ottoman and drew his daughter down by him.

No one can overhear us, can they?

Nobody, my father! My women are sleeping in the fourth chamber from here, and I have myself fastened the intervening doors. The ante-room, through which you came, is as you know entirely empty, and nobody can conceal himself there. It remains then only to fasten the door leading thence into the corridor, in order to be secure from interruption.

She hastened into the ante-room to fasten the door.

Now, my father, we are secure from listeners, said she, as she returned and resumed her place on the ottoman.

And the walls, my child? know you whether or no the walls are safe? You look at me with an expression of doubt and surprise! My God, what a harmless and innocent little maiden you still are! Have I not constantly reiterated the great and wise lesson: "Doubt everything and mistrust everything, even what you see." He who will make his fortune at Court, must first of all mistrust everybody, and consider everybody his enemy whom he is to flatter, because he can do him harm, and whom he is to hug and kiss, until in some happy embrace he can

either plunge a dagger into his breast wholly unobserved, or pour poison into his mouth.—Trust neither men, nor walls, Jane, for I tell you, however smooth and innocent both may appear, still there may be found an ambuscade behind the smooth exterior. But I will for the present believe that these walls are innocent and conceal no listeners. I will believe it, because I know this room. Those were fine and charming days, in which I became acquainted with it. Then I was yet young and handsome, and King Henry's sister was not yet married to the King of Scotland, and we loved each other so dearly. Ah, I could relate to you wonderful stories of those happy days. I could——

But, my dear father, interrupted Lady Jane, secretly trembling at the terrible prospect of being forced to listen yet again to the story of his youthful love, which she had already heard times without number, but, my dear father, doubtless you have not come hither so late at night in order to relate to me, what I,—forgive me, my Lord,—what I long since knew. You will rather communicate to me what your keen and unerring glance has discovered here.

It is true, said Lord Douglas, sadly. I now sometimes become loquacious—a sure sign that I am growing old. I have, by no means, come here to speak of the past, but of the present. Let us then speak of it. Ah, I have to day perceived much, seen much, observed much, and the result of my observations is: you will be King Henry's seventh wife.

Impossible, my Lord! exclaimed Lady Jane, whose countenance, in spite of her will, assumed an expression of delight.

Her father remarked it. My child, said he, I observe that you have not yet your features entirely under your control. You aimed just now, for example, to play the coy and virtuous, and yet your face had the expression of proud satisfaction. But this by the way! The principal thing is: You will be King Henry's seventh wife! But in order to become so, there is need of great heedfulness, a complete knowledge of present relations, constant observation of all persons, impenetrable dissimulation, and lastly, above all things, a very intimate and profound knowledge of the King, of the history of his reign and of his character. Do you possess this knowledge? Know you what it is to wish to become King Henry's seventh wife, and how you must begin in order to attain this? Have you studied Henry's character?

A little perhaps, but certainly not sufficiently. For, as you know, my Lord, worldly matters have lain upon my heart less than the Holy Church, to whose service I have consecrated myself, and to which I would have presented my whole being, my whole soul, my whole heart, as a sacrifice, had not you yourself determined otherwise concerning me. Ah, my father, had I been allowed to follow my inclination, I would have retired into a convent in Scotland, in order to spend my life in quiet contemplation and pious penances, and close my soul and ear to every profane sound. But my wishes have not been regarded, and by the mouth of His venerable and holy priests, God has commanded me to remain in the world, and take upon myself the yoke of greatness and

regal splendor. If I then struggle and strive to become queen, this is done, not because the vain pomp and glory allure me, but solely because through me, the Church, out of which is no salvation, may find a fulcrum to operate on this weak and fickle King, and because I am to bring him back again to the only true faith.

Very well played! cried her father, who had stared her steadily in the face while she was speaking. On my word, very well played. Everything was in perfect harmony, the gesticulation, the play of the eyes and the voice. My daughter, I withdraw my censure. You have perfect control over yourself. But let us speak of King Henry. We will now subject him to a thorough analysis, and no fibre of his heart, no atom of his brain shall remain unnoticed by us. We will observe him in his domestic, his political and his religious life, and get a perfectly clear view of every peculiarity of his character, in order that we may deal with him accordingly. Let us, then, speak first of his wives. Their lives and deaths afford you excellent finger-posts; for I do not deny that it is an extremely difficult and dangerous undertaking to be Henry's consort. There is needed for it much personal courage and very great self control. Know you which, of all his wives, possessed these in the highest degree? It was his first consort, *Catharine of Arragon*! By heaven, she was a sensible woman and born a queen. Henry, avaricious as he was, would have gladly given the best jewel in his crown, if he could have detected but a shadow, the slightest trace of unfaithfulness in her. But there was absolutely no means of sending this woman to the scaffold, and at that time he was as yet too cowardly and too virtuous to put her out of the way by poison. He, therefore, endured her long, until she was an old woman with grey hairs, and disagreeable for his eyes to look upon. So after he had been married to her seventeen years, the good pious King was all at once seized with a conscientious scruple, and because he had read in the bible: Thou shalt not marry thy sister, dreadful pangs of conscience came upon the noble and crafty monarch. He fell on his knees and beat his breast and cried: "I have committed a great sin; for I have married my brother's wife, and consequently my sister. But I will make amends for it. I will dissolve this adulterous marriage!"—Do you know, child, why he would dissolve it?

Because he loved Lady Anne Boleyn! said Jane, with a smile.

Perfectly correct! Catharine had grown old, and Henry was still a young man, and his blood shot through his veins like streams of fire. But he was yet somewhat virtuous and timid, and the main peculiarity of his character was as yet undeveloped. *He was not yet blood-thirsty*, that is to say, he had not yet licked blood. But you will see, how with each new queen his desire for blood increased, till at length it has now become a wasting disease. Had he then had the system of lies that he now has, he would some how have bribed a slanderer, who would have declared that he was Catharine's lover. But he was yet so innocent; he wanted yet to gratify his darling lusts in a perfectly legal way. So

Anne Boleyn must become his queen, that he might love her. And in order to attain this, he threw down the glove to the whole world, became an enemy to the Pope, and set himself in open opposition to the holy head of the Church. Because the holy father would not dissolve his marriage, King Henry became an apostate and atheist. He constituted himself head of his church, and by virtue of his authority as such, he declared his marriage with Catharine of Arragon null and void. He said that he had not in his heart given his consent to this marriage, and that it had not consequently been properly consummated.* It is true, Catharine had in the Princess Mary, a living witness of the consummation of her marriage, but what did the enamoured and selfish King care about that? Princess Mary was declared a bastard, and the Queen was now to be nothing more than the widow of the Prince of Wales. It was strictly forbidden to longer give the title and to show the honor due to a queen, to the woman who for seventeen years had been Queen of England, and had been treated and honored as such. No one was permitted to call her anything but the Princess of Wales, and that nothing might disturb the good people or the noble Queen herself in this illusion, Catharine was banished from the Court and exiled to a castle, which she had once occupied as consort of Arthur, Prince of Wales. And Henry likewise allowed her only the attendance and pension[†] which the law appoints to the widow of the Prince of Wales.†

I have ever held this to be one of the most prudent and subtle acts of our exalted King, and in the whole history of this divorce, the King conducted himself with admirable consistency and resolution. But this is to say: he was excited by opposition. Mark this then, my child, for this is the reason why I have spoken to you of these things so much at length. Mark this then: King Henry is every way entirely unable to bear contradiction, or to be subjected to restraint. If you wish to win him to any purpose, you must try to draw him from it; you must surround it with difficulties and hindrances. Therefore show yourself coy and indifferent; that will excite him. Do not court his looks; then will he seek to encounter yours. And when finally he loves you, dwell so long on your virtue and your conscience, that at length Henry, in order to quiet your conscience, will send this troublesome Catharine Parr to the block, or do as he did with Catharine of Arragon, and declare that he did not mentally give his consent to this marriage, and therefore Catharine is no queen, but only Lord Neville's widow. Ah, since he made himself high priest of his church, there is no impediment for him in matters of this kind, for only God is mightier than he.

The beautiful Anne Boleyn, Henry's second wife, proved this. I have seen her often, and I tell you, Jane, she was of wondrous beauty. Whoever looked upon her, could not but love her, and he, whom she smiled upon, felt himself fascinated and glorified. When she had borne to the King, the Princess Elizabeth, I heard him say, that he had attained the

* Burnet, vol. 1, page 37.

† Burnet, vol. 1, page 120.

summit of his happiness, the goal of his wishes, for the Queen had borne him a daughter, and so there was a regular and legitimate successor to his throne. But this happiness lasted only a brief time.

The King conceived one day that Anne Boleyn was not, as he had hitherto believed, the most beautiful woman in the world; but that there were women still more beautiful at his Court, who therefore had a stronger vocation to become Queen of England. He had seen Jane Seymour, and she without doubt was handsomer than Anne Boleyn, for she was not as yet the King's consort, and there was an obstacle to his possession of her—the Queen, Anne Boleyn.

This obstacle must be got out of the way.

Henry, by virtue of his plenitude of power, might again have been divorced from his wife, but he did not like to repeat himself, he wished to be always original; and no one was to be allowed to say that his divorces were only the cloak of his capricious lewdness.

He had divorced Catharine of Arragon on account of conscientious scruples; therefore, some other means must be devised for Anne Boleyn.

The shortest way to be rid of her was the scaffold. Why should not Anne travel that road, since so many had gone it before her? For a new force had entered into the King's life; *the tiger had licked blood!* His instinct was aroused, and he recoiled no more from those crimson rills which flowed in the veins of his subjects.

He had given Lady Anne Boleyn the crimson mantle of royalty, why then should she not give him her crimson blood? For this, there was wanted only a pretext, and this was soon found. Lady Rochfort was Jane Seymour's aunt, and she found some men, of whom she asserted that they had been lovers of the fair Anne Boleyn. She, as the Queen's first lady of the bed chamber, could of course give the most minute particulars concerning the matter, and the King believed her. He believed her, though these four pretended lovers of the Queen, who were executed for their crime, all, with the exception of a single one, asseverated that Anne Boleyn was innocent, and that they had never been in her presence. The only one who accused the Queen of illicit intercourse with him, was James Smeaton, a musician.* But he had been promised his life for this confession. However, it was not thought advisable to keep this promise, for fear that, when confronted with the Queen, he might not have the strength to sustain his assertion. But not to be altogether unthankful to him for so useful a confession, they showed him the favor of not executing him with the axe, but the more agreeable and easier death of hanging was vouchsafed to him.†

So the fair and lovely Anne Boleyn must lay her head upon the block. The day on which this took place, the King had ordered a great hunt, and early that morning we rode out to Epping forest. The King was, at first, unusually cheerful and humorous, and he commanded me to ride near him, and tell him something from the *chronique scandaleuse*

* Tytler.

† Burnet, vol. 1, page 205.

of our Court. He laughed at my spiteful remarks, and the worse I calumniated, the merrier was the King. Finally, we halted; the King had talked and laughed so much that he had at last become hungry. So he encamped under an oak, and, in the midst of his suite and his dogs, he took a breakfast, which pleased him very much, although he had now become a little quieter and more silent, and sometimes turned his face towards the direction of London with visible restlessness and anxiety. But suddenly was heard from that direction the dull sound of a cannon. We all knew that this was the signal which was to make known to the King that Anne Boleyn's head had fallen. We knew it, and a shudder ran through our whole frames. The King alone smiled, and as he arose and took his weapon from my hand, he said, with cheerful face, "It is done, the business is finished. Unleash the dogs, and let us follow the boar."*

That, said Lord Douglas, sadly, that was King Henry's funeral discourse over his charming and innocent wife.

Do you regret her, my father? asked Lady Jane, with surprise. But Anne Boleyn was, it seems to me, an enemy of our Church, and an adherent of the accursed new doctrine.

Her father shrugged his shoulders almost contemptuously. That did not prevent Lady Anne from being one of the fairest and loveliest women of Old England. And, besides, much as she inclined to the new doctrine, she did us essential good service, for she it was who bore the blame of *Thomas More's* death. Since he had not approved her marriage with the King, she hated him, as the King hated him, because he would not take the oath of supremacy. Henry, however, would have spared him, for at that time he still possessed some respect for learning and virtue, and Thomas More was so renowned a scholar that the King held him in reverence. But Anne Boleyn demanded his death, and so Thomas More must be executed. Oh, believe me, Jane, that was an important and sad hour for all England, the hour when Thomas More laid his head upon the block. We only, we gay people in the palace of Whitehall, we were cheerful and merry. We were dancing a new kind of dance, the music of which was written by the King himself. For you know the King is not merely an author, but also a composer, and as he now writes pious books, so he then composed dances.† That evening, after we had danced till we were tired, we played cards. Just as I had won a few guineas from the King, the Lieutenant of the Tower came with the tidings that the execution was over, and gave us a description of the last moments of the great scholar. The King threw down his cards, and turning an angry look on Anne Boleyn, said in an agitated voice: "You are to blame for the death of this man!" Then he arose and withdrew to his apartments, whither no one was permitted to follow him, not even the Queen.‡ You see, then, that Anne Boleyn

*The King's very words; Tytler, page 333. The oak under which this took place is still pointed out in Epping forest, and in fact is not less remarkable, as the oak of Charles II.

† Granger's Biographical History of England. Vol. 1, page 137.

‡ Tytler; page 254.

had a claim on our gratitude, for the death of Thomas More delivered Old England from another great peril. Melancthon and Bucer, and with them several of the greatest pulpit orators of Germany, had set out to come to London, and, as delegates of the Germanic Protestant Princes, to nominate the King as head of their alliance. But the terrible news of the execution of their friend frightened them back, and caused them to return when half way here.*

Peace, then, to the ashes of unhappy Anne Boleyn! However, she was avenged too, avenged on her successor and rival, for whose sake she was made to mount the scaffold; avenged on Jane Seymour.

But she was the King's beloved wife, said Jane, and when she died the King mourned for her two years.

He mourned! exclaimed Lord Douglas, contemptuously. He has mourned for all his wives. Even for Anne Boleyn he put on mourning, and in his white mourning apparel, the day after Anne's execution, he led Jane Seymour to the marriage altar.† This outward mourning, what does it signify? Anne Boleyn also mourned for Catharine of Arragon, whom she had pushed from the throne. For eight weeks she was seen in yellow mourning on account of Henry's first wife; but Anne Boleyn was a shrewd woman, and she knew very well that the yellow mourning dress was exceedingly becoming to her.‡

But the King's mourning was not merely external, said Lady Jane. He mourned really, for it was two years before he resolved on a new marriage.

Earl Douglas laughed. But he cheered himself during these two years of widowhood with a very beautiful mistress, the French Marchioness of Montreuil, and he would have married her had not the prudent beauty preferred returning to France, because she found it altogether too dangerous to become Henry's consort. For it is not to be denied, a baleful star hovers over Henry's queens, and none of them has descended from the throne in a natural way.

Yet, father, Jane Seymour did so in a very natural way; she died in childbed.

Well, yes, in childbed. And yet by no natural death, for she could have been saved. But Henry did not wish to save her. His love had already grown cool, and when the physicians asked him: whether they should save the mother or the child, he replied: "Save the child, and let the mother die. I can get wives enough."|| Ah, my daughter, I hope you may not die such a natural death as poor Jane Seymour did, for whom, as you say, the King mourned two years. But after that period, something new, something altogether extraordinary happened to the King. He fell in love with a picture, and because, in his proud self-conceit, he was convinced that the fine picture which Holbein had made of *him*, was not at all flattered, but entirely true to nature, it did

* Tytler; page 357.

† Leti; vol. 1, page 180. Granger; vol. 1, page 119.

‡ Leti; vol. 1, page 180. Granger; vol. 1, page 119.

|| Burnet.

not occur to him that Holbein's likeness of the Princess Anne of Cleves might be somewhat flattered, and not altogether faithful. So the King fell in love with a picture, and sent Ambassadors to Germany to bring the original of the portrait to England as his bride. He himself went to meet her at Rochester, where she was to land. Ah, my child, I have witnessed many queer and droll things in my eventful life, but the scene at Rochester, however, is among my most spicy recollections. The King was as enthusiastic as a poet, and deep in love as a youth of twenty, and so began our romantic wedding trip, on which Henry disguised himself and took part in it, assuming the name of My Cousin. As the King's Master of Horse, I was honored with the commission of carrying to the young Queen the greeting of her ardent husband, and begging her to receive the Knight, who would deliver to her a present from the King. She granted my request with a grin which made visible a frightful row of yellow teeth. I opened the door and invited the King to enter. Ah, you ought to have witnessed that scene! It is the only farcical passage in the bloody tragedy of Henry's married life. You should have seen with what hasty impatience the King rushed in, then suddenly, at the sight of her, staggered back and stared at the Princess. Slowly retiring, he silently thrust into my hand the rich present that he had brought, while at the same time he threw a look of flaming wrath on Lord Cromwell, who had brought him the portrait of the Princess and won him to this marriage. The romantic, ardent lover vanished with this look at his beloved. He approached the Princess again, but this time not as a cavalier, but, with harsh and hasty words, he told her he was the King himself. He bade her welcome in a few words, and gave her a cold, formal embrace. He then hastily took my hand and drew me out of the room, beckoning the rest to follow him. And when at length we were out of the atmosphere of this poor ugly Princess, and far enough away from her, the King, with angry countenance, said to Cromwell: "Call you that a beauty? She is a Flanders Mare, but no Princess."* Anne's ugliness was surely given her of God, that by it, the Church, in which alone is salvation, might be delivered from the great danger which threatened it. For had Anne of Cleves, the sister, neice, grand daughter and aunt of all the Protestant Princes of Germany, been beautiful, incalculable danger would have threatened our Church. The King could not overcome his repugnance, and again his conscience, which always appeared to be most tender and scrupulous, when it was farthest from it and most regardless, must come to his aid.

The King declared that he had been, only in appearance, not in his innermost conscience, disposed to this marriage, from which he now shrunk back, because it would be, properly speaking, nothing more than perfidy, perjury and bigamy. For Anne's father had once betrothed her to the son of the Duke of Lorraine, and had solemnly pledged him his word, to give her as a wife to the young Duke as soon as she was

* Burnet; page 174. Tytler, page 417.

of age; rings had been exchanged and the marriage contract already drawn up. Anne of Cleves, therefore, was virtually already married, and Henry, with his tender conscience, could not make one already married, his wife.* He made her, therefore, his sister, and gave her the palace at Richmond for a residence, in case she wished to remain in England.—She accepted it; her blood, which crept coldly and quietly through her veins, did not rise at the thought of being despised and repudiated. She accepted it and remained in England.

She was rejected because she was ugly; and now the King selected Catharine Howard for his fifth consort, because she was pretty.—Of this marriage I know but little to tell you, for, at that time, I had already gone to Dublin as Minister, whither you soon followed me. Catharine was very beautiful, and the King's heart, now growing old, once more flamed high with youthful love. He loved her more warmly than any other of his wives. He was so happy in her, that, kneeling down publicly in the Church, with a loud voice, he thanked God for the happiness which his beautiful young queen afforded him. But this did not last long. Even while the King was extolling it, his happiness had reached its highest point, and the next day he was dashed down into the abyss. I speak without poetical exaggeration, my child. The day before, he thanked God for his happiness, and the next morning Catharine Howard was already imprisoned and accused, as an unfaithful wife, a shameless strumpet.† More than seven lovers had preceded her royal spouse, and some of them had accompanied her even on the Progress through Yorkshire, which she made with the King, her husband. This time it was no pretence, for he had not yet had time to fall in love with another woman, and Catharine well knew how to enchain him and ever to kindle new flames within him. But just because he loved her, he could not forgive her for having deceived him. In love, there is so much cruelty and hatred; and Henry, who but yesterday lay at her feet, burned to-day with rage and jealousy, as yesterday with love and rapture. In his rage, however, he still loved her, and when he held in his hand indubitable proof of her guilt, he wept like a child. But since he could no longer be her lover, he would be her hangman; since she had spotted the crimson of his royal mantle, he would dye it afresh with her own crimson blood. And he did so. Catharine Howard was forced to lay her beautiful head upon the block, as Anne Boleyn had done before her; and Anne's death was now once more avenged. Lady Rochfort had been Anne Boleyn's accuser, and her testimony had brought that Queen to the scaffold; but now she was convicted of being Catharine Howard's assistant and confidant in her love adventures, and with Catharine, Lady Rochfort also ascended the scaffold.

Ah, the King needed a long time to recover from this blow. He searched two years for a pure, uncontaminated virgin, who might become his queen without danger of the scaffold. But he found none; so

* Burnet.

† Tytler, page 432.

he then took Lord Nevill's widow, Catharine Parr.—But you know, my child, that Catharine is an unlucky name for Henry's queens. The first Catharine he repudiated, the second he beheaded. What will he do with the third?

Lady Jane smiled. Catharine does not love him; said she, and I believe she would willingly consent, like Anne of Cleves, to become his sister, instead of his wife.

Catharine does not love the King? inquired Lord Douglas in breathless suspense. She loves another, then?

No, my father! Her heart is yet like a sheet of white paper; no single name is yet inscribed there.

Then we must write a name there, and this name must drive her to the scaffold, or into banishment! said her father impetuously. It is your business, my child, to take a steel graver, and in some way write a name in Catharine's heart so deep and indelibly that the King may some day read it there.

CHAPTER VIII.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

BOTH now kept silent for a long time. Lord Douglas had leaned back on the ottoman, and respiring heavily, seemed to breathe a little from the exertion of his long discourse. But while he rested, his large, piercing eyes were constantly turned to Jane, who, leaning back on the cushion, was staring thoughtfully into the empty air, and seemed to be entirely forgetful of her father's presence.

A cunning smile played for a moment over the countenance of the Earl as he observed her, but it quickly disappeared, and now deep folds of care gathered on his brow.

As he saw that Lady Jane was plunging deeper and deeper into reverie, he at length laid his hand on her shoulder and hastily asked: what are you thinking of, Jane?

She gave a sudden start, and looked at the Earl with an embarrassed air.

I am thinking of all that you have been saying to me, my father, replied she calmly. I am considering what benefit to our object I can draw from it.

Lord Douglas shook his head and smiled incredulously. At length he said solemnly, take care, Jane, take care that your heart does not deceive your head. If we would reach our aim here, you must, above all

things, maintain a cool heart and a cool head. Do you still possess both, Jane?

In confusion she cast down her eyes before his penetrating look. Lord Douglas noticed it, and a passionate word was already on his lips. But he kept it back. As a prudent diplomate, he knew that it is often more politic to destroy a thing by ignoring it, than to enter into an open contest with it.

The feelings are like the dragon's teeth of Theseus. If you contend with them, they always grow again anew, and with renewed energy, out of the soil.

Lord Douglas, therefore, was very careful not to notice his daughter's confusion. Pardon me, my daughter, if, in my zeal and my tender care for you, I go too far. I know that your dear and beautiful head is cool enough to wear a crown. I know that in your heart dwell only ambition and religion. Let us, then, farther consider what we have to do in order to attain our end.

We have spoken of Henry as a husband, of Henry as a man; and I hope you have drawn some useful lessons from the fate of his wives. You have learned that it is necessary to possess all the good and all the bad qualities of woman in order to control this stiff-necked and tyrannical, this lustful and bigoted, this vain and sensual man, whom the wrath of God has made King of England. You must before all things be perfect master of the difficult art of coquetry. You must become a female Proteus. To-day a Messalina, to-morrow a nun; to-day one of the literati, to-morrow a playful child; you must ever seek to surprise the King, to keep him on the stretch, to enliven him. You must never give way to the dangerous feeling of security, for in fact King Henry's wife is never safe. The axe always hangs over her head, and you must ever consider your husband as only a fickle lover, whom you must every day captivate anew.

You speak as though I were already queen, said Lady Jane smiling; and yet I cannot but think, that in order to come to that, many difficulties are to be overcome, which may indeed perhaps be insuperable.

Insuperable? exclaimed her father with a shrug of the shoulders. With the aid of the Holy Church, no hindrance is insuperable. Only we must be perfectly acquainted with our end and our means. Do not despise, then, to sound the character of this King ever and again, and be certain you will always find in him some new hidden recess, some surprising peculiarity.—We have spoken of him as a husband and the father of a family, but of his religious and political standing, I have as yet told you nothing. And yet that, my child, is the principal point in his whole character.

In the first place, then, Jane, I will tell you a secret. The King, who has constituted himself high priest of his Church,—whom the Pope once called "The Knight of the Truth and the Faith,"—the King has at the bottom of his heart no religion. He is a wavering reed, which the wind turns this way to-day, and that way to-morrow. He knows not his own

will. and coquetting with both parties, to-day he is a heretic, in order to exhibit himself as a strong, unprejudiced, enlightened man; to-morrow a Catholic, in order to show himself an obedient and humble servant of God, who seeks and finds his happiness only in love and piety. But for both confessions of faith he possesses at heart a profound indifference; and had the Pope at that time placed no difficulties in his way, had he consented to his divorce from Catharine, Henry would have always remained a very good and active servant of the Catholic Church. But they were imprudent enough to irritate him by contradiction; they stimulated his vanity and pride to resistance; and so Henry became a Church reformer, not from conviction, but out of pure love of opposition. And that, my child, you must never forget, for, by means of this lever, you may very well convert him again to a devout, dutiful and obedient servant of our Holy Church. He has renounced the Pope, and usurped the supremacy of the Church, but he cannot summon up courage to carry out his work and throw himself wholly into the arms of the Reformation. However much he has opposed the person of the Pope, still he has always remained devoted to the Church, although perhaps he does not know it himself. He is no Catholic, and he hears mass; he has broken up the monasteries, and yet forbids priests to marry; he has the Lord's supper administered under both kinds, and believes in the real transubstantiation of the wine into the Redeemer's holy blood. He destroys the convents, and yet commands that vows of chastity, spoken by man or woman, must be faithfully kept; and lastly, Auricular Confession is still a necessary constituent of his Church. And these he calls his Six Articles,* and the foundation of his English Church. Poor, short-sighted and vain man! He knows not that he has done all this only because he wanted to be Pope himself, and that he is nothing more than an anti-pope of the Holy Father at Rome, whom he, in his blasphemous pride, dares call "the Bishop of Rome."

But, for this audacity, said Jane, with looks of burning rage, the anathema has struck him and laid a curse upon his head, and given him up to the hatred, contempt and scorn of his own subjects. Therefore, the holy Father has justly named him "the apostate and lost son, the blaspheming usurper of the Holy Church." Therefore, the Pope has declared his crown forfeited, and promised it to him who will vanquish him by force of arms. Therefore, the Pope has forbidden any of his subjects to obey him, and respect and recognize him as King †

And yet he remains King of England, and his subjects still obey him in slavish submission, exclaimed Earl Douglas, shrugging his shoulders. It was very unwise to go so far in threats, for one should never threaten with punishment which he is not likewise able to really execute. This Romish interdict has rather been an advantage to the King, than done him harm, for it has forced the King into haughtier opposition, and proved to his subjects that a man may really be under an interdict and yet in prosperity and the full enjoyment of life.

* Burnet, vol. 1, page 229. Tytler, page 492. † Leti, vol. 1, page 184.

The Pope's excommunication has not hurt the King at all ; his throne has not felt the slightest jar from it, but the apostacy of the King has deprived the Holy See at Rome of a very perceptible support ; therefore we must bring the faithless King back to the Holy Church, for she needs him. And this, my daughter, is the work that God and the will of his holy representative have placed in your hands. A noble, glorious, and at the same time profitable work, for it makes you a queen ! But I repeat, be cautious, never irritate the King by contradiction. Without their knowing it, we must lead the wavering where salvation awaits them. For, as we have said, he is a waverer ; and in the haughty pride of his royalty, he has the presumption to wish to stand above all parties, and to be himself able to found a new Church, a Church which is neither Catholic nor Protestant, but *his* Church ; to which, in the Six Articles, the so-called "Bloody Statute," he has given its laws.

He will not be Protestant, nor Catholic, and in order to show his impartiality, he is an equally terrible persecutor of both parties. So that it has come to pass that we must say : In England, Catholics are hanged, and those not such, are burned.* It gives the King pleasure to hold with steady and cruel hand the balance between the two parties, and on the same day that he has a Papist incarcerated, because he has disputed the King's supremacy, he has one of the Reformed put upon the rack, because he has denied the *real* transubstantiation of the wine, or perhaps has disputed concerning the necessity of Auricular Confession. Indeed, during the last session of Parliament, five men were hanged because they disputed the supremacy, and five others burned because they professed the reformed views ! And this evening, Jane, this, the King's wedding night, by the special order of the King, who wanted to show his impartiality as head of the Church, Catholics and Protestants have been coupled together like dogs, and hurried to the stake, the Catholics being condemned as traitors, and the others as heretics.†

Oh, said Jane, shuddering and turning pale, I will not be Queen of England. I have a horror of this cruel, savage King, whose heart is wholly without compassion or pity !

Her father laughed. Do you not then know, child, how you can make the hyena gentle, and the tiger tame ? You throw them again and again a fresh prey, which they may devour, and since they love blood so dearly, you constantly give them blood to drink, so that they may never thirst for it. The King's only steady and unchanging peculiarity is his cruelty and delight in blood ; one then must always have some food ready for these, then he will ever be a very affectionate and gracious King and husband.

And there is no lack of objects for this blood-thirstiness. There are so many men and women at his Court, and when he is precisely in a blood-thirsty humor, it is all the same to Henry whose blood he drinks. He has shed the blood of his wives and relatives ; he has executed those

* Leti, vol. 1, page 142.

† Tytler, page 28.

whom he called his most confidential friends; he has sent the noblest men of his kingdom to the scaffold.

Thomas More knew him very well, and in a few striking words he summed up the whole of the King's character. Ah, it seems to me that I see now the quiet and gentle face of this wise man, as I saw him standing in yonder window-bay, and near him the King, his arms around the neck of High-Chancellor More, and listening to his discourse with a kind of reverential devotion. And when the King had gone, I walked up to Thomas More and congratulated him on the high and world-renowned favor in which he stood with the King. The King really loves you, said I. "Yes," replied he, with his quiet, sad smile, "yes, the King truly loves me! But that would not for one moment hinder him from giving my head for a valuable diamond, a beautiful woman, or a hand's breadth of land in France."* He was right, and for a beautiful woman, the head of this sage had to fall, of whom the most Christian Emperor and King, Charles V, said: "Had I been the master of such a servant, of whose ability and greatness we have had so much experience for many years; had I possessed an adviser so wise and earnest as Thomas More was, I would rather have lost the best city of my realm, than so worthy a servant and counsellor."†

No, Jane, be that your first and most sacred rule, never to trust the King, and never reckon on the duration of his affection and the manifestations of his favor. For, in the perfidy of his heart, it often pleases him to load with tokens of his favor, those whose destruction he has already resolved upon, and to adorn and decorate with orders and jewels to-day, those whom to-morrow he is going to put to death. It flatters his self-complacency, like the lion, to play a little with the puppy he is about to devour. Thus did he with Cromwell, for many years his counsellor and friend, who had committed no other crime than that of having first exhibited to the King the portrait of the ugly Anne of Cleves, whom Holbein had turned into a beauty. But the King took good care not to be angry with Cromwell, or to reproach him for it. Much more, in recognition of his great services, he raised him to the Earldom of Essex, decorated him with the Order of the Garter, and appointed him Lord Chamberlain, and then, when Cromwell felt perfectly secure and proudly basked in the sunshine of royal favor, then all at once the King had him arrested and dragged to the tower, in order to accuse him of high treason.‡ And so Cromwell was executed, because Anne of Cleves did not please the King, and because Hans Holbein had flattered her picture.

But now we have had enough of the past, Jane. Now let us speak of the present and of the future, my daughter. Let us now first of all devise the means to overthrow this woman who stands in our way. When she is once overthrown, it will not be very difficult for us to put you in her place. For you are now here, near the King. The great mistake in our earlier efforts was, that we were not present and could work only

* Leti, vol. 1, page 194.

† Tytler, page 354.

‡ Tytler, page 423.

through go-betweens and confidants. The King did not see you, and since the unlucky affair with Anne of Cleves, he mistrusts likenesses. I very well knew that, for I, my child, confide in no one, not even in the most faithful and noblest friends. I rely upon nobody but ourselves. Had we been here, you would now be Queen of England instead of Catharine Parr. But, to our misfortune, I was still the favorite of the Regent of Scotland, and as such, I could not venture to approach Henry. It was necessary that I should fall into disgrace there, in order to be again sure of the King's favor here.

So I fell into disgrace and fled with you hither. Now, then, here we are, and let the fight begin. And you have to-day already taken an important step towards our end. You have attracted the notice of the King, and established yourself still more securely in the favor of Catharine. I confess, Jane, I am charmed with your prudent conduct. You have this day won the hearts of all parties, and it was wonderfully shrewd in you to come to the aid of the Earl of Surrey, as you at the same time won to you the heretical party, to which Anne Askew belongs. Oh, it was indeed, Jane, a stroke of policy that you made. For the Howard family is the most powerful and greatest at Court, and Henry, Earl of Surrey, is one of its noblest representatives. Therefore we have now already a powerful party at Court, which has in view only the high and holy aim of securing a victory for the Holy Church, and which quietly and silently works only for this: to again reconcile the King to the Pope. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, like his father, the Duke of Norfolk, is a good Catholic, as his niece, Catharine Howard, was; only she, besides God and the Church, was a little too fond of the images of God—fine looking men. It was this that gave the victory to the other party and forced the Catholic to succumb to the heretical party at Court. Yes, for the moment, Cranmer with Catharine has got the better of us, but soon Gardiner with Jane Douglas will overcome the heretics, and send them to the scaffold. That is our plan, and, God permitting, we will carry it out.

But it will be a difficult undertaking, said Lady Jane, with a sigh. The Queen is a pure, transparent soul; she has a shrewd head, and a clear glance. She is moreover guileless in her thoughts, and recoils with true maidenly timidity from every sin.

We must cure her of this timidity, and that is your task, Jane. You must despoil her of these strict notions about virtue. With flattering voice you must ensnare her heart, and entice it to sin.

Oh, that is an infernal plot, said Lady Jane, turning pale. That, my father, would be a crime, for that would be not only destroying her earthly happiness, but also imperilling her soul. I must entice her to a crime; that is your dishonorable demand? But I will not obey you! It is true, I hate her, for she stands in the way of my ambition. It is true, I will destroy her, for she wears the crown which I wish to possess; but never will I be so base as to pour into her very heart the poison by which she shall fall. Let her seek the poison for herself; I will

not hold back her hand; I will not warn her. Let her seek the ways of sin herself; I will not tell her that she has erred; but, I will, from afar, dog her, and watch each step, and listen for every word and sigh, and when she has committed a crime, then will I betray her, and deliver her up to her judges. That is what I can and will do. I will be the demon to drive her from paradise in God's name, but not the serpent to entice her in the devil's name to sin.

She paused, and, panting for breath, sunk back upon the cushion; but her father's hand was laid upon her shoulder with a convulsive grip, and, pale with rage and with eyes flashing with anger, he stared at her.

A cry of terror burst from Lady Jane. She, who never had seen her father but smiling and full of kindness, scarcely recognized that countenance, distorted with rage. She could scarcely convince herself that this man, with eyes darting fire, scowling eyebrows and lips quivering with rage, was really her father.

You will not? exclaimed he, with a hollow, threatening voice. You dare rebel against the holy commands of the Church? Have you, then, forgotten what you promised to the Holy Fathers, whose pupil you are? Have you forgotten that the brothers and sisters of the Holy League are permitted to have no other will than that of their master? Have you forgotten the sublime vow which you made to our master, Ignatius Loyola? Answer me, unfaithful and disobedient daughter of the Church. Repeat to me the oath, which you took, when he received you into the Holy Society of the Disciples of Jesus! Repeat your oath, I say!

As if constrained by an invisible power, Jane had arisen, and now stood, her hands folded across her breast, submissive and trembling before her father, whose erect, proud and wrathful form towered above her.

I have sworn, said she, to subject my own thought and will, my life and endeavors, obediently to the will of the Holy Father. I have sworn to be a blind tool in the hand of my masters, and to do only what they command and enjoin. I have vowed to serve the Holy Church, in which alone is salvation, in every way and with all the means at my command; that I will despise none of these means; consider none trifling, disdain none, provided it leads to the end. For the end sanctifies the means, and nothing is a sin which is done for the honor of God and the Church!

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam! said her father, devoutly folding his hands. And know you, what awaits you, if you violate your oath?

Earthly disgrace and eternal destruction await me. The curse of all my brethren and sisters awaits me. Eternal damnation and punishment. With thousands of torments and tortures of the rack, will the Holy Fathers put me to death, and as they kill my body and throw it as food to the beasts of prey, they will curse my soul and deliver it over to purgatory.

And what awaits you if you remain faithful to your oath, and obey the commands given you?

Honor and glory on earth, eternal blessedness in Heaven.

Then you will be a queen on earth and a queen in Heaven. You know, then, the sacred laws of the Society, and you remember your oath?

I remember it.

And you know that the holy Loyola, before he left us, gave the Society of Jesus, in England, a Master and General, whom all the brethren and sisters must serve and submit to; to whom they owe blind obedience and service without questioning.

I know it.

And you know, likewise, by what sign the Associates may recognize the General?

By Loyola's ring, which he wears on the forefinger of his right hand.

Behold here this ring! said the Earl, drawing his hand out of his doublet.

Lady Jane uttered a cry, and sank almost senseless at his feet.

Lord Douglas, smiling graciously, raised her in his arms. You see, Jane, I am not merely your father, but your master also. And you will obey me, will you not?

I will obey! said she, almost inaudibly, as she kissed the hand with the fatal ring.

You will be to Catharine Parr, as you have expressed it, the serpent, that seduces her to sin?

I will.

You will beguile her into sin and entice her to indulge a love, which must lead her to destruction?

I will do it, my father.

I will now tell you whom she is to love, and who is to be the instrument of destruction. You will so manage the Queen that she will love Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey.

Jane uttered a scream, and clung to the back of a chair to keep from falling.

Her father observed her with penetrating, angry looks. What means this outcry? Why does this choice surprise you? asked he.

Lady Jane had already gained her self-possession. It surprised me, said she, because the Earl is betrothed.

A singular smile played about the Earl's lips. It is not the first time, said he, that even a man already married has become dangerous to a woman's heart, and often the very impossibility of possession adds fuel to the flames of love. Woman's heart is ever so full of selfishness and contradiction.

Lady Jane cast down her eyes, and made no reply. She felt that the piercing and penetrating look of her father was resting on her face. She knew that, just then, he was reading her soul, although she did not look at him.

Then you no longer refuse? asked he, at length. You will inspire the young Queen with love for the Earl of Surrey.

I will endeavor to do it, my father!

If you try, with a real and energetic determination, to succeed, you will prevail. For, as you said, the Queen's heart is still free; it is, then, like a fruitful soil, which is only waiting for some one to sow the seed in it, to bring forth flowers and fruit. Catharine Parr does not love the King; you will, then, teach her to love Henry Howard.

Yet, my father, said Lady Jane, with a sarcastic smile, to bring about this result, one must, before all things, be acquainted with a magic spell, through the might of which the Earl will first glow with love for Catharine. For the Queen has a proud soul, and she will never so forget her dignity, as to love a man who is not inflamed with an ardent passion for her. But the Earl has not only a bride, but, as it is said, a mistress also.

Ah, you consider it then perfectly unworthy of a woman to love a man who does not adore her? asked the Earl, in a significant tone. I am rejoiced to hear this from my daughter; and thus to be certain that she will not fall in love with the Earl of Surrey, who is everywhere else called "the lady-killer." And if you have informed yourself in so surprising a manner as to the Earl's private relations, you have done so, without doubt, only because your sagacious and subtle head has already guessed what commission I would give you with respect to the Earl. Besides, my daughter, you are in error; and if a certain high, but not on that account the less very unfortunate Lady, should happen to really love the Earl of Surrey, her lot will, perhaps, be the common one: to practice resignation.

An expression of joyful surprise passed over the countenance of Lady Jane, while her father thus spoke; but it was forced to instantly give way to a deathly paleness, as the Earl added: Henry Howard is destined for Catharine Parr, and you are to help her to love so hotly this proud, handsome Earl, who is a faithful servant of the Church, wherein alone is salvation, that she will forget all considerations and all dangers.

Lady Jane ventured one more objection. She caught eagerly at her father's words, to seek still for some way of escape.

You call the Earl a faithful servant of our Church, said she, and yet you would implicate him also in your dangerous plot? You have not, then, my father, considered, that it is just as pernicious to love the Queen, as to be loved by her? And, without doubt, if love for the Earl of Surrey bring the Queen to the scaffold, the head of the Earl will fall at the same time, no matter whether he return her love or not.

The Earl shrugged his shoulders.

When the question is about the weal of the Church and our holy religion, the danger, which, thereby, it may be, threatens one of our number, must not frighten us back. Holy sacrifices must be always offered to a holy cause. Well and good, then, let the Earl's head fall, provided, the only saving Church gains new vigor from this blood of martyrs.

But, see, Jane, the morning already begins to dawn, and I must hasten to leave you, lest these courtiers, ever given to slandering, may in some way or other, take the father for a lover, and cast suspicion on the immaculate virtue of my Jane. Farewell, then, my daughter. We both, now, know our roles, and will take care to play them with success. You are the friend and confidant of the Queen, and I the harmless courtier, who tries, now and then, to gain a smile from the King by some kind of merry jest. That is all. Good morning, then, Jane, and good night. For you must sleep, my child, so that your cheeks may remain fresh and your eyes bright. The King hates pining pale-faces. Sleep, then, future Queen of England!

He gently kissed her forehead, and left the room with lingering step.

Lady Jane stood and listened to the sound of his footsteps, gradually dying away, when she sank on her knees, wholly crushed, utterly stunned.

My God, my God, murmured she, while streams of tears flooded her face, and I am to inspire the Queen with love for the Earl of Surrey, and I, I love him!

CHAPTER IX.

LENDEMAIN.

The great levee was over. Sitting beside the King on the throne, Catharine had received the congratulations of her Court; and the King's smiling look, and the tender words which, in undertone, he now and then addressed to the Queen, had manifested to the prudent and expert courtiers that the King was to-day just as much enamored of his young consort, as he had been yesterday of his bride. Therefore, every one exerted himself to please the Queen, and to catch every look, every smile, which she let fall, like sunbeams, here and there, in order to see for whom they were intended, so that they might, perchance, by this means, divine who were to be the future favorites of the Queen, and be the first to become intimate with them.

But the young Queen directed her looks to no one in particular. She was friendly and smiling, yet one felt that this friendliness was constrained, this smile full of sadness. The King alone did not notice it. He was cheerful and happy, and it seemed to him, therefore, that nobody at his Court could dare sigh, when he, the King, was satisfied.

After the grand presentation, at which all the great and noble of the realm had passed in formal procession before the royal pair, the King

had, according to the Court etiquette of the time, given his hand to his consort, led her down from the throne and conducted her to the middle of the hall, in order to present to her the personages in waiting at her Court.

But this walk from the throne to the centre of the hall had greatly fatigued the King; this promenade of thirty steps was for him a very unusual and troublesome performance, and the King longed to change to something else more agreeable. So he beckoned to the Chief Master of Ceremonies, and bade him open the door leading into the dining room. Then he ordered his "house equipage" to be brought up, and seating himself in it, with the utmost stateliness, he had the sedan kept at the Queen's side, waiting, impatiently, till the presentation should at last conclude, and Catharine accompany him to lunch.

The announcements of the Maids of Honor and female attendants had been already made, and now came the gentlemen's turn.

The Chief Master of Ceremonies read from his list the names of those cavaliers, who were, henceforth, to be in waiting near the Queen, and which names the King had written down with his own hand. And at each new appointment a slight expression of pleased astonishment flitted across the faces of the assembled courtiers, for it was always one of the youngest, handsomest, and most amiable Lords whom the Master of Ceremonies had to name.

Perhaps the King proposed to play a cruel game of hazard, in surrounding his consort with the young men of his Court; he wished to plunge her into the midst of danger, either to let her perish there, or, by her avoiding danger, to be able to place the unimpeachable virtue of his young wife in the clearest light.

The list had begun with the less important offices, and, ever ascending higher, they now came to positions the highest and of greatest consequence.

Still, the Queen's Master of the Horse and Chamberlain had not been named, and these were, without doubt, the most important charges at the Queen's Court. For one or the other of these officers was always very near the Queen. When she was in the palace, the Lord of the Chamber had to remain in the ante-room, and no one could approach the Queen but through his mediation. To him the Queen had to give her orders with regard to the schemes and pleasures of the day. He was to contrive new diversions and amusements. He had the right of joining the Queen's narrow evening circle, and to stand behind the Queen's chair, when the royal pair, at times, desired to sup without ceremony.

This place of Chief Chamberlain was, therefore, a very important one, for since it confined him a large part of the day in the Queen's presence; it was scarcely avoidable, that the Lord Chamberlain should become either the confidential and attentive friend, or the malevolent and lurking enemy of the Queen!

But the place of Master of Horse was of no less consequence. For

as soon as the Queen left the palace, whether on foot or in a carriage; whether to ride in the forest, or to glide down the Thames in her gilded yacht, the Master of Horse must be ever at her side, must ever attend her. Indeed this service was still more exclusive, still more important. For, though the Queen's apartments were open to the Lord Chamberlain, yet, however, he was never alone with her. The attending Maids of Honor were always present and prevented there being any *tête-à-têtes* or intimacy between the Queen and her Chamberlain.

But with the Master of Horse it was different. Since many opportunities presented themselves, when he could approach the Queen unnoticed, or at least speak to her without being overheard. He had to offer her his hand to assist her in entering her carriage; he could ride near the door of her coach; he accompanied her on water excursions and pleasure rides, and these last were so much the more important because they afforded him, to a certain extent, opportunity for a *tête-à-tête* with the Queen. For only the Master of Horse was permitted to ride at her side; he even had precedence of the ladies of the suite, so as to be able to give the Queen immediate assistance in case of any accident, or the stumbling of her horse. Therefore, no one of the suite could perceive what the Queen said to the Master of Horse, when he rode at her side.

It was understood, therefore, how influential this place might be. Besides, when the Queen was at Whitehall, the King was almost always near her, while, thanks to his daily increasing corpulency, he was not exactly in condition to leave the palace otherwise than in a carriage.

It was, therefore, very natural that the whole company at Court awaited, with eager attention and bated breath, the moment when the Master of Ceremonies would name these two important personages, whose names had been kept so secret, that nobody had yet learned them! That morning, just before he handed the list to the Master of Ceremonies, the King had written down these two names with his own hand.

But not the Court only, but also the King himself was watching for these two names. For he wished to see the effect of them, and, by the different expression of faces, estimate the number of the friends of these two nominees. The young Queen alone exhibited the same unconcerned affability; her heart only beat with uniform calmness, for she did not once suspect the importance of the moment.

Even the voice of the Master of Ceremonies trembled slightly, as he now read: To the place of High Chamberlain to the Queen, his Majesty appoints: My Lord Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey!

An approving murmur was heard, and almost all faces manifested glad surprise.

He has a great many friends, muttered the King. He is dangerous, then! An angry look darted from his eyes upon the young Earl, who was now approaching the young Queen, to bend his knee before her and to press to his lips the proffered hand.

Behind the Queen stood Lady Jane, and as she beheld thus close before her, the young man, so handsome, so long yearned for, and so se-

cretely adored ; and as she thought of her oath, she felt a violent pang, raging jealousy, killing hatred towards the young Queen, who had, it is true, without suspecting it, robbed her of the loved one, and condemned her to the terrible torture of pandering to her.

The Chief Master of Ceremonies now read in a loud solemn voice : To the place of Master of Horse, his Majesty appoints : My Lord Thomas Seymour, Earl of Sudley !

It was very well that the King had at that moment directed his whole attention to his courtiers, and sought to read in their appearance the impression made by this nomination.

Had he observed his consort, he would have seen that an expression of delighted surprise flitted across Catharine's countenance, and a charming smile played around her lips.

But the King, as we have said, thought only of his Court ; he saw only that the number of those who rejoiced at Seymour's appointment did not come up to that of those who received Surrey's nomination with so much applause.

Henry frowned and muttered to himself : These Howards are too powerful ! I will keep a watchful eye upon them !

Thomas Seymour approached the Queen, and, bending his knee before her, kissed her hand. Catharine received him with a gracious smile. My Lord, said she, you will at once enter on service with me, and indeed, as I hope, in such manner as will be acceptable to the whole Court. My Lord, take the fleetest of your coursers and hasten to castle Holt, where the Princess Elizabeth is staying. Carry her this letter from her royal father, and she will follow you thither. Tell her that I long to embrace in her a friend and sister, and that I pray her to pardon me, if I cannot give up to her exclusively, the heart of her King and father ; but that I also must still keep a place in the same for myself. Hasten to castle Holt, my Lord, and bring us Princess Elizabeth.

CHAPTER X.

THE KING'S FOOL.

Two years had passed away since the King's marriage, and still Catharine Parr had always kept in favor with her husband ; still her enemies were foiled in their attempts to ruin her, and raise the seventh queen to the throne.

Catharine had been ever cautious, ever discreet. She had always preserved a cold heart and a cool head. Each morning she had said to herself that this day might be her last ; that some incautious word, some

inconsiderate act, might deprive her of her crown and her life. For Henry's savage and cruel disposition seemed, like his corpulency, to increase daily, and it needed only a trifle to inflame him to the highest pitch of rage; rage which, each time, fell with fatal stroke on him who aroused it.

A knowledge and consciousness of this had made the Queen cautious. She did not wish to die yet. She still loved life so much. She loved it because it had as yet afforded her so little delight. She loved it because she had so much happiness, so much rapture and enjoyment yet to hope from it.

She did not wish to die yet, for she was ever waiting for that life, of which she had a foretaste only in her dreams, and which, her palpitating and swelling heart told her was ready to awake in her, and, with its sunny brilliant eyes, arouse her from the winter sleep of her existence.

It was a beautiful, sunny, spring day. Catharine wanted to avail herself of it, to take a ride and forget for one brief hour that she was a queen. She wanted to enjoy the woods, the sweet May breeze, the song of birds, the green meadows, and to inhale in full draughts the pure air.

She wanted to ride. Nobody suspected how much secret delight and hidden rapture lay in these words. No one suspected that for months she had been looking forward with pleasure to this ride, and scarcely dared to wish for it, just because it would be the fulfilment of her ardent wishes.

She was already dressed in her riding habit, and the little red velvet hat, with its long drooping white feather, adorned her beautiful head. Walking up and down the room, she was waiting only for the return of the Lord Chamberlain, whom she had sent to the King, to enquire whether he wished to speak with her before her ride.

Suddenly the door opened, and a strange apparition showed itself on the threshold. It was a small, compact masculine figure, clad in vesture of crimson silk, which was trimmed in a style showy and motley enough, with puffs and bows of all colors, and which just on account of its motley appearance, contrasted strangely enough with the man's white hair, and earnest and sombre face.

Ah, the King's fool! said Catharine, with a merry laugh. Well, John, what is it that brings you here? Do you bring me a message from the King, or have you made a bold hit, and wish me to take you again under my protection?

No, Queen, said John Heywood, seriously, I have made no bold hit, nor do I bring a message from the King. I bring you nothing but myself. Ah, Queen, I see you want to laugh, but I pray you forget for a moment that John Heywood is the King's fool, and that it does not become him to wear a serious face and indulge sad thoughts like other men.

Oh, I know that you are not merely the King's fool, but a poet also! said Catharine with a gracious smile.

Yes, said he, I am a poet, and, therefore, it is altogether proper for me to wear this foolscap, for poets are all fools, and it were better for them to be hung on the nearest tree instead of being permitted to run about, in their crazy enthusiasm, and babble things, on account of which people of sense despise and ridicule them. I am a poet, and therefore, Queen, I have put on this fool's dress, which places me under the King's protection, and allows me to say to him all sorts of things which nobody else has the courage to speak out. But to-day, Queen, I come to you neither as a fool nor as a poet, but I come to you because I wish to cling to your knees and kiss your feet. I come because I wish to tell you that you have made John Heywood forever your slave! He will from this time forth lie like a dog before your threshold and guard you from every enemy and every evil which may press upon you. Night and day he will be ready for your service, and know neither repose nor rest, if it is necessary to fulfil your command or your wish?

As he thus spoke, with trembling voice and eyes dimmed with tears, he knelt down and bowed his head at Catharine's feet.

But what have I done to inspire you with such a feeling of thankfulness? asked Catharine with astonishment. How have I deserved that you, the powerful and universally dreaded favorite of the King, should dedicate yourself to my service?

What have you done? said he. My Lady, you have saved my son from the stake! They had condemned him—that handsome, noble youth—condemned him, because he had spoken respectfully of Thomas More; because he had said this great and noble man did right to die, rather than be false to his convictions. Ah, nowadays, it requires such a trifle to condemn a man to death; a couple of thoughtless words are sufficient! And this miserable, lick-spittle Parliament, in its dastardliness and worthlessness, always condemns and sentences, because it knows that the King is always thirsty for blood, and always wants the fires of the stake to keep him warm! So they had condemned my son likewise, and they would have executed him, but for you. But you, whom God has set as an angel of reconciliation on this regal throne, reeking with blood; you who daily risk your life and your crown, to save the life of some one of these unfortunates, whom fanaticism and thirst for blood have sentenced, and to procure their pardon, you have saved my son also.

How, that young man who was to be burned yesterday, was your son?

Yes, he was my son.

And you did not tell the King so? and you did not intercede for him?

Had I done so, he would have been irretrievably lost! For you well know, the King is so proud of his impartiality and his virtue! Oh, had he known that Thomas is my son, he would have condemned him to death, to show the people that Henry the Eighth everywhere strikes the guilty and punishes the sinner, whatever name he may bear, and

whoever may intercede for him! Ah, even your supplication would not have softened him, for the high priest of the English Church could never have pardoned this young man for not being the legitimate son of his father, for not having the right to bear his name, because his mother was the spouse of another man whom Thomas must call father!

Poor Heywood! Yes, now I understand. The King would, indeed, never have forgiven this, and had he known it, your son would have inevitably been condemned to the stake.

You saved him, Queen! Do you not believe now that I shall be forever thankful to you?

I do believe it, said the Queen, with a pleasant smile, as she extended her hand for him to kiss. I believe you, and I accept your service.

And you will need it, Queen, for a tempest is gathering over your head, and soon the lightning will flash and the thunders roll.

Oh, I fear not! I have strong nerves! said Catharine, smiling. When a storm comes, it is but a refreshing of nature, and I have always seen that after a storm, the sun shines again.

You are a brave soul! said John Heywood, sadly.

That is, I am conscious of no guilt!

But your enemies will invent a crime to charge you with. Ah, soon as it is the aim to calumniate a neighbor and plunge him in misery, men are all poets!

But you just now said that poets are crack-brained, and should be hung to the first tree. We will, therefore, treat these slanderers as poets, that is all.

No, that is not all! said John Heywood energetically. For slanderers are like earth worms. You cut them in pieces, but instead of thereby killing them, you multiply each one and give it several heads.

But what is it, then, that I am accused of? exclaimed Catharine, impatiently. Does not my life lie open and clear before you all? Do I ever take pains to have any secrets? Is not my heart like a glass house, into which you can all look, to convince yourselves that it is a soil wholly unfruitful, and that not a single poor little flower grows there?

Though this be so, your enemies will sow weeds and make the King believe that it is burning love which has grown up in your heart.

How? They will accuse me of having a love affair! asked Catharine, and her lips slightly trembled.

I do not know their plans yet; but I will find them out. There is a conspiracy at work. Therefore, Queen, be on your guard! Trust nobody, for foes are ever wont to conceal themselves under hypocritical faces and deceiving words.

If you know my enemies, name them to me! said Catharine, impatiently. Name them to me that I may beware of them.

I have not come to accuse anybody, but to warn you. I shall, therefore, take good care not to point out your enemies to you; but I will name your friends to you.

Ah, then, I have friends, too! whispered Catharine, with a happy smile.

Yes, you have friends; and, indeed, such as are ready to give their blood and life for you.

Oh, name them, name them, to me? exclaimed Catharine, all of a tremble with joyful expectation.

I name first, Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. He is your true and staunch friend, on whom you can build. He loves you as Queen, and he prizes you as the associate whom God has sent him to bring to completion, here at the Court of this most Christian and bloody King, the holy work of the Reformation, and to cause the light of knowledge to illuminate this night of superstition and priestly domination. Build strongly on Cranmer, for he is your surest and most invariable supporter, and should he sink, your fall would inevitably follow. Therefore, not only rely on him, but also protect him, and look upon him as your brother; for what you do for him, you do for yourself.

Yes, you are right, said Catharine, thoughtfully. Cranmer is a noble and staunch friend; and often enough already he has protected me, in the King's presence, against those little pin-prickings of my enemies, which do not indeed kill, but which make the whole body sore and faint.

Protect him, and thus protect yourself.

Well, and the other friends?

I have given Cranmer the precedence; but now, Queen, I name myself as the second of your friends. If Cranmer is your staff, I will be your dog; and, believe me, so long as you have such a staff and so faithful a dog, you are safe. Cranmer will warn you of every stone that lies in your way, and I will bite and drive off the enemies, who, hidden behind the thicket, lurk in the way to fall upon you from behind.

I thank you! Really, I thank you! said Catharine, heartily. Well, and what more?

More? inquired Heywood with a sad smile.

Mention a few more of my friends.

Queen, it is a great deal, if one in a life time has found two friends upon whom he can rely, and whose fidelity is not guided by selfishness. You are, perhaps, the only crowned head that can boast of such friends.

I am a woman, said Catharine, thoughtfully, and many women surround me and daily swear to me unchanging faithfulness and attachment. How? are all these unworthy the title of friend? Is even Lady Jane Douglas unworthy; she, whom I have called my friend these many long years, and whom I trust as a sister? Tell me, John Heywood, you, who, as it is said, know everything, and search out everything that takes place at Court; tell me, is not Lady Jane Douglas my friend?

John Heywood suddenly became serious and gloomy, and looked on the ground, absorbed in reflection. Then he swept his large, bright eyes all around the room, in a scrutinizing manner, as if he wished to

convince himself that no listener was really concealed there, and stepping close up to the Queen, he whispered: Trust her not; she is a papist, and Gardiner is her friend.

Ah, I suspected it! whispered Catharine, sadly.

But listen, Queen; give no expression to this suspicion by look, or words, or by the slightest indication. Lull this viper into the belief that you are harmless; lull her to sleep, Queen. She is a venomous and dangerous serpent, which must not be roused, lest, before you suspect it, it bite you on the heel. Be always gracious, always confidential, always friendly towards her. Only, Queen, do not tell her what you would not confide to Gardiner and Earl Douglas likewise. Oh, believe me, she is like the lion in the Doge's palace at Venice. The secrets that you confide to her, will become accusations against you before the tribunal of blood.

Catharine shook her head with a smile. You are too severe, John Heywood. It is possible that the religion which she secretly professes has estranged her heart from me, but she would never be capable of betraying me, or of leaguering herself with my foes. No, John, you are mistaken. It would be a crime to believe thus. My God, what a wicked and wretched world it must be in which we could not trust even our most faithful and dearest friends!

The world is indeed wicked and wretched, and one must despair of it, or consider it a merry jest, with which the devil tickles our noses. For me, it is such a jest, and therefore, Queen, I have become the King's fool, which at least gives me the right of spurring out upon the crawling brood all the venom of the contempt I feel for mankind, and of speaking the truth to those who have only lies, like dripping honey, ever on their lips. The sages and poets are the real fools of our day, and since I did not feel a vocation to be a king, or a priest, a hangman, or a lamb for sacrifice, I became a fool.

Yes, a fool; that is to say, an epigrammatist, whose biting tongue makes the whole Court tremble.

Since I cannot, like my royal master, have these criminals executed, I give them a few sword cuts with my tongue. Ah, I tell you, you will much need this ally. Be on your guard, Queen; I heard this morning the first growl of the thunder, and in Lady Jane's eyes I observed the stealthy lightning. Trust her not. Trust no one here but your friends Cramner and John Heywood.

And you say, that in all this Court, among all these brilliant women, these brave cavaliers, the poor Queen has not a single friend, not a soul, whom she may trust, on whom she may lean? Oh, John Heywood, think again, have pity on the poverty of a queen. Think again. Say, only you two? No friend but you?

And the Queen's eyes filled with tears, which she tried in vain to repress.

John Heywood saw it and sighed deeply. Better than the Queen herself perhaps, he had read the depths of her heart, and knew its deep

wound. But he also had sympathy with her pain, and wished to mitigate it a little.

I recollect, said he, gently and mournfully—yes, I recollect, you have yet a third friend at this Court.

Ah, a third friend! exclaimed Catharine, and again her voice sounded cheery and joyous. Name him to me, name him! For you see clearly I am burning with impatience to hear his name.

John Heywood looked into Catharine's glowing countenance with a strange expression, at once searching and mournful, and for a moment dropped his head upon his breast and sighed.

Now, John, give me the name of this third friend!

Do you not know him, Queen? asked Heywood, as he again stared steadily in her face. Do you not know him? It is Thomas Seymour, Earl of Sudley.

There passed as it were a sunbeam over Catharine's face, and she uttered a low cry.

John Heywood said, sadly: Queen, the sun strikes directly in your face. Take care that it does not blind your bright eyes. Stand in the shade, your Majesty, for, hark, there comes one who might report the sunshine in your face for a conflagration.

Just then the door opened and Lady Jane appeared on the threshold! She threw a quick, searching glance around the room, and an imperceptible smile passed over her beautiful pale face.

Your Majesty, said she solemnly, everything is ready! You can begin your ride when it pleases you. The Princess Elizabeth awaits you in the ante-room, and your Master of Horse already hold the stirrup of your steed.

And the Lord Chamberlain? asked Catharine, blushing. Has he no message from the King to bring me?

Aye! said the Earl of Surrey as he entered. His Majesty bids me tell the Queen that she may extend her ride as far as she wishes. The glorious weather is well worth that the Queen of England should enjoy it, and enter into a contest with the sun.

Oh, the King is the most gallant of cavaliers, said Catharine, with a happy smile. Now, come, Jane, let us ride.

Pardon me, your Majesty, said Lady Jane, stepping back. I cannot, to-day, enjoy the privilege of accompanying your Majesty. Lady Anne Ettersville is to-day in attendance.

Another time, then, Jane! And you, Earl Douglas, you ride with us?

The King, your Majesty, has ordered me to his cabinet.

Behold now a Queen abandoned by all her friends! said Catharine cheerily, as with light, elastic step she passed through the hall to the court-yard.

Here is something going on which I must fathom! muttered John Heywood, who had left the hall with the rest. A mousetrap is set, for the cats remain at home, and are hungry for their prey.

Lady Jane had remained behind in the hall with her father. Both had stepped to the window, and were silently looking down into the yard, where the brilliant cavalcade of the Queen and her suite was moving about in motley confusion.

Catharine had just mounted her palfrey ; the noble animal, recognizing his mistress, neighed loudly, and, giving a snort, reared up with his noble burden.

Princess Elizabeth, who was close to the Queen, uttered a cry of alarm. You will fall, Queen, said she ; you ride such a wild animal.

Oh, no indeed, said Catharine, smiling ; Hector is not wild. It is with him as with me. The charming May air has made us both mettlesome and happy. Away, then, my Ladies and Lords ; our horses must be to-day swift as birds. We ride to Epping Forest.

And through the open gateway dashed the cavalcade. The Queen in front ; at her right, the Princess Elizabeth ; at her left, the Master of Horse, Thomas Seymour, Earl of Sudley.

When the train had disappeared, father and daughter stepped back from the window, and looked at each other with strange, dark and disdainful looks.

Well, Jane ? said Earl Douglas at length. She is still Queen, and the King becomes daily more unwieldly and ailing. It is time to give him a seventh queen.

Soon, my father, soon.

Loves the Queen Henry Howard at last ?

Yes, he loves her ! said Jane, and her pale face was now colorless as a winding sheet.

I ask, whether *she* loves him ?

She will love him ! murmured Jane, and then suddenly mastering herself, she continued : but it is not enough to make the Queen in love ; doubtless it would be still more efficient if some one could instill a new love into the King. Did you see, father, with what ardent looks his Majesty yesterday watched me and the Duchess of Richmond ?

Did I see it ? The whole Court talked about it.

Well, now, my father, manage it so that the King may be heartily bored to-day, and then bring him to me. He will find the Duchess of Richmond with me.

Ah, a glorious thought. You will surely be Henry's seventh queen.

I will ruin Catharine Parr, for she is my rival, and I hate her ! said Jane, with glowing cheeks and flashing eyes. She has been Queen long enough, and I have bowed myself before her. Now she shall fall in the dust before me, and I will set my foot upon her head.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RIDE.

It was a wondrous morning. The dew still lay on the grass of the meadows, over which they had just ridden to reach the thicket of the forest, in whose trees resounded the melodious voices of blithe birds. Then they rode along the banks of a babbling forest stream, and spied the deer that came forth into the glade on the other side, as if they wanted, like the Queen and her train, to listen to the song of the birds and the murmuring of the fountains.

Catharine felt a nameless, blissful pleasure swell her bosom. She was to-day no more the Queen surrounded by perils and foes; no more the wife of an unloved, tyrannical husband; not the Queen trammelled with the shackles of etiquette. She was a free, happy woman, who, in presageful, blissful trepidation, smiled at the future, and said to each minute: stay, stay, for thou art so beautiful.

It was a sweet, dreamy happiness, the happiness of that hour. With glad heart, Catharine would have given her crown for it, could she have prolonged this hour to an eternity.

He was at her side. He of whom John Heywood had said, that he was among her most trustful and trusty friends. He was there; and even if she did not dare to look at him often, often to speak to him, yet she felt his presence, she perceived the glowing beams of his eyes, which rested on her with consuming fire. Nobody could observe them. For the Court rode behind them, and before them and around them was naught but nature breathing love and smiling with joy, naught but Heaven and God.

She had forgotten, however, that she was not quite alone, and that while Thomas Seymour rode on her left, on her right was Princess Elizabeth,—that young girl of fourteen years,—that child, who, however, under the fire of suffering and the storms of adversity, was early forced to precocious bloom, and whose heart, by the tears and experience of her unhappy childhood, had acquired an early ripeness. Elizabeth, a child in years, had already all the strength and warmth of a woman's feelings. Elizabeth, the disowned and disinherited Princess, had inherited her father's pride and ambition, and when she looked on the Queen, and perceived that little crown wrought on her velvet cap in diamond embroidery, she felt in her bosom a sharp pang, and remembered, with feelings of bitter grief, that this crown was destined never to adorn her head, since the King, by solemn act of Parliament, had excluded her from the succession to the throne.*

*Tytler. page 340.

But for a few weeks this pain had been more gentle, and less burning. Another feeling had silenced it—Elizabeth, who was never to be queen, or sovereign—Elizabeth might be a wife at least. Since she was denied a crown, they should at least allow her instead a wife's happiness; they should not grudge her the privilege of twining in her hair a crown of myrtle.

She had been early taught to ever have a clear consciousness of all her feelings; nor had she now shrunk from reading the depths of her heart with steady and sure eye.

She knew that she loved, and that Thomas Seymour was the man whom she loved.

But the Earl? Did he love her in return? Did he understand the child's heart? Had he, beneath the childish face, already recognized the passionate, proud woman? Had he guessed the secrets of this soul, at once so maidenly and chaste, and yet so passionate and energetic?

Thomas Seymour had never betrayed a secret, and what he had, it may be, read in the eyes of the Princess, and what he had, perhaps, spoken to her in the quiet shady walks of Hampton Court, or in the long, dark corridors of Whitehall, was known to no one, save those two. For Elizabeth had a strong masculine soul; she needed no confidant to share her secrets; and Thomas Seymour had feared even, like the immortal hair dresser of King Midas, to dig a hole and utter his secret therein; for he knew very well that, if the reed grew up and repeated his words, he might, for these words, lay his head on the block.

Poor Elizabeth! She did not even suspect that the Earl's secret and her own were not however the same; she did not suspect that Thomas Seymour, if he guessed her secret, might, perhaps, avail himself of it to make thereof a brilliant foil for his own secret.

He had, like her, ever before his eyes, the diamond crown on the head of the young Queen, and he had noticed well how old and feeble the King had become of late.

As he now rode by the side of the two Princesses, he felt his heart swell with a proud joy, and bold and ambitious schemes alone occupied his soul.

The two women understood nothing of this. They were both too much occupied with their own thoughts; and while Catharine's eyes swept with beaming look the landscape far and wide, the brow of the Princess was slightly clouded, and her sharp eye rested with a fixed and watchful gaze on Thomas Seymour.

She had noticed the impassioned look which he had now and then fastened on the Queen. The slight, scarcely perceptible tremor of his voice, when he spoke, had not escaped her.

Princess Elizabeth was jealous; she felt the first torturing motions of that horrible disease, which she had inherited from her father, and in the feverish paroxysms of which, the King had sent two of his wives to the scaffold.

She was jealous, but not of the Queen; much more, she dreamed not

that the Queen might share and return Seymour's love. It never came into her mind to accuse the Queen of an understanding with the Earl. She was jealous only of the looks which he directed towards the Queen; and because she was watching those looks, she could not at the same time read the eyes of her young stepmother also; she could not see the gentle flames which kindled by the fire of his looks glowed in hers.

Thomas Seymour had seen them, and had he now been alone with Catharine, he would have thrown himself at her feet and confided to her all the deep and dangerous secrets that he had so long harbored in his breast; he would have left to her the choice of bringing him to the block, or of accepting the love which he consecrated to her.

But there, behind them, were the spying, all observing, all surmising courtiers; there was the Princess Elizabeth, who, had he ventured to speak to the Queen, would have conjectured from his manner, the words which she could not understand; for love sees so clearly, and jealousy has such keen ears.

Catharine suspected nothing of the thoughts of her companions. She alone was happy; she alone gave herself up with full soul to the enjoyment of the moment. She drew in with intense delight the pure air; she drank in the odor of the meadow blossoms; she listened with thirsty ear to the murmuring song which the wind wafted to her from the boughs of the trees. Her wishes extended not beyond the hour; she rested in the full enjoyment of the presence of her beloved. He was there—what needed she more to make her happy!

Her wishes extended not beyond this hour. She was only conscious how delightful it was, thus to be at her beloved's side, to breathe the same air, to see the same sun, the same flowers on which his eyes rested, and on which their glances at least might meet in *kisses*, which were denied to their lips.

But as they thus rode along, silent and meditative, each occupied with his own thoughts, there came the assistance for which Thomas Seymour had prayed, fluttering along in the shape of a fly.

At first this fly sported and buzzed about the nose of the fiery, proud beast which the Queen rode; and as no one noticed it, it was not disturbed by Hector's tossing of his mane, but crept securely and quietly to the top of the noble courser's head, pausing a little here and there, and sinking his sting into the horse's flesh, so that he reared and began loudly to neigh.

But Catharine was a bold and dexterous rider, and the proud spirit of her horse only afforded her delight, and gave the Master of Horse an opportunity to praise her skill and coolness.

Catharine received with a sweet smile the encomiums of her beloved. But the fly kept creeping on, and impelled by a diabolic delight, now penetrated the horse's ear.

The poor, tormented animal made a spring forwards. This spring, instead of freeing him from his enemy, made him penetrate the ear still farther, and sink his sting still deeper into the soft fleshy part of the same.

Stung by the maddening pain, the horse cast off all control, and, heedless of bridle and scorning the bit, dashed forwards in a furious run— forwards over the meadow swift as an arrow, resistless as the lightning.

On, on, to the Queen's rescue! thundered the Master of Horse, and with mad haste, away flew he also over the meadow.

To the help of the Queen! repeated Princess Elizabeth, and she likewise spurred her horse and hurried forwards, accompanied by the whole suite.

But what is the speed of a horse ever so swift, but yet in his senses, compared with the raving madness of a crazy courser, that, despising all subjection, and mocking at the bridle, dashes ahead, foaming with the sense of freedom and unrestraint, uncontrollable as the surge lashed by the storm!

Already far behind them lay the meadows, far behind them the avenues leading through the woods, and over brooks and ditches, over meadows and wastes, Hector was dashing on.

The Queen still sat firmly in the saddle; her cheeks were colorless; her lips trembled; but her eye was still bright and clear. She had not yet lost her presence of mind; she was perfectly conscious of her danger. The din of screaming, screeching voices, which she heard at first, had long since died away in silence behind her. An immense solitude, the deep silence of the grave was around her. Naught was heard save the panting and snorting of the horse; naught but the crash and clatter of his hoofs.

Suddenly, however, this sound seemed to find an echo. It was repeated over yonder. There was the same snorting and panting; there was the same resounding trampling of hoofs.

And now, oh, now, struck on Catharine's ear the sound of a voice only too well loved, and made her scream aloud with delight and desire.

But this cry frightened anew the enraged animal. For a moment, exhausted and panting, he had slackened in his mad race; now he sprang forwards with renewed energy; now he flew on as if impelled by the wings of the wind.

But ever nearer and nearer sounded the loved voice, ever nearer the tramp of his horse.

They were now upon a large plain, shut in on all sides by woods. While the Queen's horse circled the plain in a wide circuit, Seymour's horse, obedient to the rein, sped directly across it, and was close behind the Queen's horse.

Only a moment more! Only hold your arms firmly around the animal's neck, that the shock may not hurl you off when I lay hold of the rein! shouted Seymour, and he set his spurs into his horse's flanks, so that he sprang forwards with a wild cry.

This cry roused Hector to new fury. Panting for breath, he shot forwards with fearful leaps, now straight into the thicket of the woods.

I hear his voice no more, murmured Catharine. And at length overcome with anxiety and the dizzy race, and worn out with her exertions, she closed her eyes; her senses appeared to be about leaving her.

But at this moment, a firm hand seized with iron grasp the rein of her horse, so that he bowed his head, shaking, trembling and almost ashamed, as though he felt he had found his lord and master.

Saved! I am saved! faltered Catharine, and breathless, scarcely in her senses, she leaned her head on Seymour's shoulder.

He lifted her gently from the horse, and placed her on the soft moss beneath an ancient oak. Then he tied the horses to a bough, and Catharine, trembling and faint, sank on her knees to rest after such violent exertion.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DECLARATION.

THOMAS SEYMOUR returned to Catharine. She still lay there with closed eyes, pale and motionless.

He gazed on her long and steadily; his eyes drank in, in long draughts, the sight of this beautiful and noble woman, and he forgot at that moment that she was a queen.

He was at length alone with her. At last, after two years of torture, of resignation, of dissimulation, God had granted him this hour, for which he had so long yearned, which he had so long considered unattainable. Now it was there, now it was his.

And had the whole Court, had King Henry himself, come right then, Thomas Seymour would not have heeded it; it would not have affrighted him. The blood had mounted to his head and overcome his reason. His heart, still raving and roaring so violently from his furious ride and his anxiety for Catharine, allowed him to hear no other voice than that of passion.

He knelt by the Queen and seized her hand.

Perhaps it was this touch which roused her from her unconsciousness. She raised her eyes and gazed around with a perplexed look.

Where am I? breathed she in a low tone.

Thomas Seymour pressed her hand to his lips. You are with the most faithful and devoted of your servants, Queen!

Queen! This word roused her from her stupor, and caused her to raise herself half up.

But where is my Court? Where is the Princess Elizabeth? Where are all the eyes that heretofore watched me? Where are all the listeners and spies who accompany the Queen?

They are far away from here, said Seymour in a tone which betrayed

his secret delight. They are far away from here and need at least an hour's time to come up with us. An hour, Queen! are you aware what that is to me? An hour of freedom, after two years of imprisonment! An hour of happiness, after two years of daily torture, daily endurance of the torments of hell!

Catharine, who had at first smiled, had now become grave and sad.

Her eye rested on the cap which had fallen from her head and lay near her on the grass.

She pointed with trembling finger to the crown and said softly: recognize you that sign, my Lord?

I recognize it, my Lady; but in this hour, I no longer shrink back at it. There are moments in which life is at its crowning point, and when one heeds not the abyss that threatens close beneath. Such an hour is the present. I am aware that this hour makes me guilty of high-treason and may send me to the block; but nevertheless I will not be silent. The fire which burns in my breast consumes me. I must at length give it vent. My heart, that for years has burned upon a funeral pyre, and which is so strong, that in the midst of its agonies, it has still ever felt a sensation of blessedness. My heart must at length find death or favor. You shall hear me, Queen!

No, no, said she almost in anguish. I will not, I cannot hear you! Remember that I am Henry the Eighth's wife, and that it is dangerous to speak to her. Silence then, Earl, silence, and let us ride on.

She would have arisen, but her own exhaustion and Lord Seymour's hand caused her to sink back again.

No, I will not be silent, said he. I will not be silent until I have told you all that rages and glows within me. The Queen of England may either condemn me or pardon me, but she shall know, that to me she is not Henry the Eighth's wife, but only the most charming and graceful, the noblest and loveliest woman of England. I will tell her, that I never recollect she is my queen, or, if I do so, it is only to curse the King, who was presumptuous enough to set this brightly sparkling jewel in his bloody crown.

Catharine, almost horrified, laid her hand on Seymour's lips. Silence, unhappy man, silence! Know you that it is your sentence of death which you are now uttering? Your sentence of death, if any soul hears you?

But no one hears me. No one save the Queen, and God, who, however, is perhaps more compassionate and merciful than the Queen. Accuse me then, Queen; go and tell your King that Thomas Seymour is a traitor; that he dares love the Queen. The King will send me to the scaffold, but I shall nevertheless deem myself happy, for I shall at least die by your instrumentality. Queen, if I cannot live for you, then beautiful it is to die for you!

Catharine listened to him wholly stupified, wholly intoxicated. This was for her, language wholly new and never heard before, at which her heart trembled in blissful awe, which rushed around her in enchanting

melodies and lulled her into a sweet stupefaction. Now she herself even forgot that she was Queen, that she was the wife of Henry, the blood-thirsty and the jealous. She was conscious only of this, that the man whom she had so long loved, was now kneeling at her side. With rapture she drank in his words, which struck upon her ear like exquisite music.

Thomas Seymour continued. He told her all he had suffered. He told her he had often resolved to die, in order to put an end to these tortures, but that then a glance of her eye, a word from her lips had given him the strength to live, and still longer endure these tortures, which were at the same time so full of rapture.

But now, Queen, now my strength is exhausted, and it is for you to give me life or death. To-morrow I will ascend the scaffold, or you shall permit me to live, to live for you.

Catharine trembled and looked at him well nigh astounded. He seemed so proud and imperative, she almost felt a fear of him, but it was the happy fear of a loving, meek woman before a strong, commanding man.

Know you, said she with a charming smile, know you that you almost have the appearance of wishing to command me to love you?

No, Queen, said he proudly, I cannot command you to love me, but I bid you tell me the truth. I bid you do this, for I am a man, who has the right to demand the truth of a woman face to face. And I have told you, you are not the Queen to me. You are but a beloved, an adored woman. This love has nothing to do with your royalty, and while I confess it to you, I do not think that you abase yourself when you receive it. For the true love of a man is ever the holiest gift that he can present to a woman, and if a beggar dedicates it to a queen, she must feel herself honored by it. Oh, Queen, I am a beggar. I lie at your feet and raise my hands beseechingly to you; but I want not charity, I want not your compassion and pity, which may, perhaps, grant me an alms to lessen my misery. No I want you, yourself. I require all or nothing. It will not satisfy me that you forgive my boldness, and draw the veil of silence over my mad attempt. No, I wish you to speak, to pronounce my condemnation, or a benediction on me. Oh, I know you are generous and compassionate, and even if you despise my love and will not return it, yet, it may be, you will not betray me. You will spare me and be silent. But I repeat it, Queen, I do not accept this offer of your magnanimity. You are to make me either a criminal or a god; for I am a criminal if you condemn my love, a god if you return it.

And do you know, Earl, whispered Catharine, that you are very cruel? You want me to be either an accuser or an accomplice. You leave me no choice but that of being either your murderer or a perjured and adulterous woman—a wife who forgets her plighted faith and her sacred duty, and defiles the crown, which my husband has placed upon my head, with stains, which Henry will wash out with my own blood and with yours also.

Let it be so then, cried the Earl, almost joyfully. Let my head fall no matter how or when, if you but love me; for then I shall still be immortal; for a moment in your arms is an eternity of bliss.

But I have already told you that not only your head, but mine also, is concerned in this matter. You know the King's harsh and cruel disposition. The mere suspicion is enough to condemn me. Ah, if he knew what we have just now spoken here, he would condemn me, as he condemned Catharine Howard, though I am not guilty as she was. Ah, I shudder at the thought of the block; and you, Earl Seymour, you would bring me to the scaffold, and yet you say you love me?

Seymour sunk his head mournfully upon his breast and sighed deeply. You have pronounced my sentence, Queen, and though you are too noble to tell me the truth, yet I have guessed it. No, you do not love me, for you see with keen eyes the danger that threatens you, and you fear for yourself. No, you love me not, else you would think of nothing save love alone. The dangers would animate you, and the sword which hangs over your head, you would not see, or you would with rapture grasp its edge, and say: "what is death to me, since I am happy! What care I for dying, since I have felt immortal happiness!" Ah, Catharine, you have a cold heart and a cool head. May God preserve them both to you; then will you pass through life quietly and safely; but you will yet be a poor wretched woman, and when you come to die, they will place a royal crown upon your coffin, but love will not weep for you. Farewell, Catharine, Queen of England, and since you cannot love him, give Thomas Seymour, the traitor, your sympathy at least!

He bowed low and kissed her feet, then he arose and walked with firm step to the tree where he had tied the horses.

But now Catharine arose, now she flew to him, and grasping his hand, asked, trembling and breathless: what are you about to do? Whither are you going?

To the King, my Lady!

And what will you do there?

I will show him a traitor who has dared love the Queen. You have just killed my heart; he will kill only my body. That is less painful, and I will thank him for it.

Catharine uttered a cry, and with passionate vehemence drew him back to the place where she had been resting.

If you do what you say, you will kill me, said she with trembling lips. Hear me, hear! The moment you mount your horse to go to the King, I mount mine too; but not to follow you, not to return to London, but to plunge with my horse down yonder precipice. Oh, fear nothing; they will not accuse you of my murder. They will say that I plunged down there with my horse, and that the raging animal caused my death.

Queen, take good heed, consider well what you say! exclaimed Thomas Seymour, his countenance clearing up and his face beaming with delight. Bear in mind that your words must be either a condemnation, or an avowal. I wish death, or your love! Not the love of a Queen, who

thinks to be gracious to her subject, when for the moment she elevates him to herself; but the love of a woman who bows her head in meekness and receives her lover as at the same time her lord. Oh, Catharine, be well on your guard! If you come to me with the pride of a Queen, if there be even one thought in you which tells you that you are bestowing a favor on a subject as you take him to your heart, then be silent and let me go hence. I am proud, and as noble born as yourself, and however love throws me conquered at your feet, yet it shall not bow my head in the dust! But if you say that you love me. Catharine, for that I will consecrate my whole life to you. I will be your lord, but your slave also. There shall be in me no thought, no feeling, no wish, that is not devoted and subservient to you. And when I say that I will be your lord, I mean not thereby that I will not lie forever at your feet and bow my head in the dust, and say to you: tread on it, if it seem good to you, for I am your slave!

And speaking thus, he dropped on his knees and pressed to her feet, his face, whose glowing and noble expression ravished Catharine's heart.

She bent down to him, and gently lifting his head, looked with an indescribable expression of happiness and love deep into his beaming eyes.

Do you love me? asked Seymour as he put his arm softly around her slender waist, and arose from his kneeling attitude.

I love you! said she with a firm voice and a happy smile. I love you, not as a queen, but as a woman; and if perchance this love bring us both to the scaffold, well then, we shall at least die together, to meet again there above!

No, think not now of dying, Catharine, think of living, of the beautiful, enchanting future, which is beckoning to us. Think of the days which will soon come, and in which our love will no longer require secrecy or a veil, but when we will manifest it to the whole world, and can proclaim our happiness from a full glad breast! Oh, Catharine, let us hope that compassionate and merciful death will loose at last the unnatural bonds that bind you to that old man. Then, when Henry is no more, then will you be mine, mine with your entire being, with your whole life; and instead of a proud regal crown, a crown of myrtle shall adorn your head! Swear that to me, Catharine; swear, that you will become my wife, as soon as death has set you free.

The Queen shuddered, and her cheeks grew pale. Oh, said she with a sigh, death then is our hope and perhaps the scaffold our end?

No, Catharine, love is our hope and happiness our end: Think of life, of our future! Grant my request. Swear to me, here, in the face of God, and of sacred and calm nature around us, swear to me, that from the day when death frees you from your husband you will be mine, my wife, my consort! Swear to me, that you regardless of etiquette and unmindful of tyrannical custom will be Lord Seymour's wife, before the knell for Henry's death has died away. We will find a priest, who may bless our love and sanctify the covenant that we have this day conclud-

ed for eternity! Swear to me, that till that wished-for day, you will keep for me your truth and love, and never forget that my honor is yours also, that your happiness is also mine!

I swear it! said Catharine solemnly. You may depend upon me at all times, and at all hours. Never will I be untrue to you; never will I have a thought that is not yours. I will love you as Thomas Seymour deserves to be loved, that is with a devoted and faithful heart. It will be my pride to subject myself to you, and with glad soul will I serve and follow you, as your true and obedient wife.

I accept your oath! said Seymour solemnly. But in return I swear, that I will honor and esteem you, as my Queen and mistress. I swear to you, that you shall never find a more obedient subject, a more unselfish counsellor, a more faithful husband, a braver champion, than I will be. My life for my Queen, my entire heart for my beloved; this henceforth shall be my motto, and may I be disowned and despised by God and by you, if ever I violate this oath.

Amen! said Catharine with a bewitching smile.

Then both were silent. It was that silence, which only love and happiness knows—that silence which is so rich in thoughts and feelings, and therefore so poor in words!

The wind rustled whispering in the trees, among whose dark branches here and there a bird's warbling, or flute-like notes resounded. The sun threw his emerald light over the soft velvety moss carpet of the ground, which rising and falling in gentle undulating lines, formed lovely little hollows and hillocks, on which now and then was seen here and there the slender and stately figure of a hart, or a roe, that looking around searchingly with his bright eyes, started back frightened into the thicket on observing these two human figures and the group of horses encamped there.

Suddenly this quiet was interrupted by the loud sound of the hunter's horn, and in the distance were heard confused cries and shouts which were echoed by the dense forest and repeated in a thousand tones.

With a sigh the Queen raised her head from the Earl's shoulder.

The dream was at an end; the angel came with flaming sword to drive her from paradise.

For she was no longer worthy of paradise. The fatal word had been spoken, and while it brought her love, it had perjured her.

Henry's wife, his by her vow taken before the altar, had betrothed herself to another and given him the love that she owed her husband.

It is past, said she mournfully. These sounds call me back to my slavery. We must both resume our *roles*. I must become Queen again.

But first swear to me, that you will never forget this hour; that you will ever think upon the oaths which we have mutually sworn.

She looked at him almost astounded. My God, can truth and love be forgotten?

You will remain ever true, Catharine?

She smiled. See now, my jealous Lord, do I address such questions to you?

Oh, Queen, you well know that you possess the charm that binds forever.

Who knows! said she dreamily, as she raised her enthusiastic look to heaven, and seemed to follow the bright silvery clouds which were sailing slowly across the blue ether.

Then her eyes fell upon her beloved, and laying her hand softly upon his shoulder, she said: Love is like God—eternal, primeval and ever present! But you must believe in it to feel its presence; you must trust it to be worthy of its blessing!

But the hallooing and the clangor of the horns came nearer and nearer. Even now was heard the barking of the dogs and the tramp of horses.

The Earl had untied the horses, and led Hector, who was now quiet and gentle as a lamb, to his mistress.

Queen, said Thomas Seymour, two delinquents now approach you! Hector is my accomplice, and had it not been that the fly I now see on his swollen ear had made him raving, I should be the most pitiable and unhappy man in your Kingdom, while now I am the happiest and most enviable.

The Queen made no answer, but she put both her arms around the animal's neck and kissed him.

Henceforth, said she, then I will ride only Hector, and when he is old and unfit for service——

He shall be tended and cared for in the stud of Countess Catharine Seymour! interrupted Thomas Seymour, as he held the Queen's stirrup and assisted her into the saddle.

The two rode in silence towards the sound of the voices and horns, both too much occupied by their own thoughts to interrupt them by trifling words.

He loves me! thought Catharine. I am a happy, enviable woman, for Thomas Seymour loves me.

She loves me! thought he, with a proud, triumphant smile. I shall, therefore, one day become Regent of England.

Just then they came out on the large level meadow, through which they had previously ridden, and over which now came, scattered here and there in motley confusion, the entire royal suite, Princess Elizabeth at the head.

One thing more! whispered Catharine. If you ever need a messenger to me, apply to John Heywood. He is a friend whom we can trust.

And she sprang forward to meet the Princess, to recount to her all the particulars of her adventure, and her happy rescue by the Master of Horse.

Elizabeth, however, listened to her with glowing looks and thoughts distracted, and as the Queen then turned to the rest of her suite, and

surrounded by her ladies and lords, received their congratulations, a slight sign from the Princess called Thomas Seymour to her side.

She allowed her horse to curvet some paces forwards, by which she and the Earl found themselves separated a little from the rest, and were sure of being overheard by no one.

My Lord, said she in a vehement, almost threatening voice, you have often and in vain besought me to grant you an interview. I have denied you. You intimated that you had many things to say to me, for which we must be alone, and which must reach no listener's ear. Well, now, to-day I grant you an interview, and I am at last inclined to listen to you!

She paused and waited for a reply. But the Earl remained silent. He only made a deep and respectful bow, bending to the very neck of his horse. Well and good; I will go to this rendezvous were it but to blind Elizabeth's eyes, that she may not see what she never ought to see. That was all.

The young Princess cast on him an angry look, and a dark scowl gathered on her brow. You understand well how to control your joy, said she; and any one to see you just now would think——

That Thomas Seymour is discreet enough not to let even his rapture be read in his countenance at this dangerous Court, interrupted the Earl in a low murmur. When, Princess, may I see you, and where?

Wait for the message that John Heywood will bring you to-day, whispered Elizabeth, as she sprang forwards and again drew near the Queen.

John Heywood, again! muttered the Earl. The confidant of both, and so, my hangman, if he wishes to be!

CHAPTER XIII.

"LE ROI S'ENNUIE."

KING HENRY was alone in his study. He had spent a few hours in writing on a devout and edifying book, which he was preparing for his subjects, and which, in virtue of his dignity as supreme Lord of the Church, he designed to commend to their reading instead of the Bible.

He now laid down his pen, and, with infinite complacency, looked over the written sheets, which were to be to his people a new proof of his paternal love and care, and so convince them that Henry the Eighth was not only the noblest and most virtuous of Kings, but also the wisest.

But this reflection failed to make the King more cheerful to-day ; perhaps, because he had already indulged in it too frequently. To be alone, annoyed and disturbed him. There were in his breast so many secret and hidden voices, whose whispers he dreaded, and which, therefore, he sought to drown. There were so many recollections of blood, which ever and again rose before him, however often he tried to wash them out in fresh blood, and which the King was afraid of, though he assumed the appearance of never repenting, never feeling disquietude.

With hasty hand he touched the gold bell standing by him, and his face brightened as he saw the door open immediately and Earl Douglas make his appearance on the threshold.

Oh, at length ! said the Lord, who had very well understood the expression of Henry's features ; at length the King condescends to be gracious to his people.

I gracious ? asked the King, utterly astonished. Well, how am I so ?

By your Majesty's resting at length from his exertions and giving a little thought to his valuable and needful health. When you remember, Sire, that England's weal depends solely and alone on the weal of her King, and that you must be and remain healthy, that your people likewise may be healthy.

The King smiled with satisfaction. It never came into his head to doubt the Earl's words. It seemed to him perfectly natural that the weal of his people depended on his person ; but yet it was always a lofty and beautiful song, and he loved to have his courtiers repeat it.

The King, as we have said, smiled, but there was something unusual in that smile, which did not escape the Earl.

He is in the condition of a hungry anaconda, said Earl Douglas to himself. He is on the watch for prey, and he will be bright and lively again just as soon as he has tasted a little human flesh and blood. Ah, luckily we are well supplied in that way. Therefore, we will render unto the King what is the King's. But we must be cautious and go to work warily.

He approached the King and imprinted a kiss on his hand.

I kiss this hand, said he, which has been to day the fountain through which the wisdom of the head has been poured forth on this blessed paper. I kiss this paper, which will announce and explain to happy England God's pure and unadulterated word ; but yet I say let this suffice for the present, my King ; take rest ; remember awhile, that you are not only a sage, but also a man.

Yes, and truly a weak and decrepit one ! sighed the King, as with difficulty he essayed to rise, and in so doing leaned so heavily on the Earl's arm that he almost broke down under the monstrous load.

Decrepit ! said Earl Douglas, reproachfully. Your Majesty moves to-day with as much ease and freedom as a youth, and my arm was by no means needed to help you up.

Nevertheless, we are growing old ! said the King, who, from his weariness, was unusually sentimental and low spirited to-day.

Old ! repeated Earl Douglas. Old, with those eyes darting fire, that lofty brow, and that face in every feature so noble. No, your Majesty. Kings have this in common with the Gods—they never grow old.

And therein they resemble parrots to a hair ! said John Heywood, who just then entered the room. I own a parrot which my great grandfather inherited from his great grandfather, who was hair-dresser to Henry the Fourth, and which to-day still sings with the same vollubility as he did a hundred years ago : “ Long live the King, long live this paragon of virtue, sweetness, beauty and mercy. Long live the King ! ” He has cried this for hundreds of years, and he has repeated it for Henry the Fifth and Henry the Sixth, for Henry the Seventh and Henry the Eighth ! And wonderful, the kings have changed, but the song of praise has always been appropriate, and has ever been only the simple truth. Just like yours, my Lord Douglas ! Your Majesty may depend upon it, he speaks the truth, for he is near akin to my parrot, which always calls him “ My Cousin,” and has taught him his immortal song of praise to kings.

The King laughed, while Earl Douglas cast at John Heywood a sharp, spiteful look.

He is an impudent imp, is he not, Douglas ? said the King.

He is a fool ! replied he with a shrug.

Exactly, and therefore I just now told you the truth. For you know children and fools speak the truth. And I became a fool just on this account, that the King, whom you all deceive by your lies, may have about him some creature, besides his looking-glass, to tell him the truth.

Well, and what truth will you serve up for me to day ?

It is already served, your Majesty ! So lay aside for a little your regal crown and your high priesthood, and conclude to be for awhile a carnivorous beast. It is very easy to become a King. For that, nothing more is necessary than to be born of a queen under a canopy. But it is very difficult to be a man who has a good digestion. It requires a healthy stomach and a light conscience. Come, King Henry, and let us see whether you are not merely a King, but also a man that has a good stomach.

And with a merry laugh he took the King's other arm and led him with the Earl into the dining-room.

The King, who was an extraordinary eater, silently beckoned his suite to take their places at the table, after he had seated himself in his gilded chair.

With grave and solemn air he then received from the hands of the Master of Ceremonies the ivory tablet on which was the bill of fare for the day. The King's dinner was a solemn and important affair. A multitude of post-wagons and couriers were ever on the way to bring from the remotest ends of the earth dainties for the royal table. The bill of fare, therefore, to day, as ever, exhibited the choicest and rarest dishes, and always when the King found one of his favorite ones writ-

ten down, he made an assenting and approving motion of the head, which always lighted up the face of the Master of Ceremonies like a sunbeam. There were birds' nests brought from the East Indies by a fast sailing vessel, built specially for the purpose. There were hens from Calcutta, and truffles from Languedoc, which the poet-King Francis the First of France had the day before sent to his royal brother as a special token of affection. There was the sparkling wine of Champagne, and the fiery wine of the Island of Cyprus, which the Republic of Venice had sent to the King as a mark of respect. There were the heavy wines of the Rhine, which looked like liquid gold, and diffused the fragrance of a whole bouquet of flowers, and with which the Protestant Princes of Northern Germany hoped to fuddle the King, whom they would have gladly placed at the head of their league. There, too, were the monstrous, gigantic partridge pasties, which the Duke of Burgundy had sent, and the glorious fruits of the south from the Spanish coast, with which the Emperor Charles the Fifth supplied the King of England's table. For it was well known, that in order to make the King of England propitious, it was necessary first to satiate him; that his palate must first be tickled in order to gain his head or his heart.

But to-day all these things seemed insufficient to give the King the blissful pleasure, which at other times was wont to be with him, when he sat at table. He heard John Heywood's jests and biting epigrams with a melancholy smile and a cloud was on his brow.

To be in cheerful humor, the King absolutely needed the presence of ladies. He needed them as the Hunter needs the roe to enjoy the pleasure of the chase—that pleasure which consists in killing the defenceless, and in declaring war against the innocent and peaceful.

The crafty courtier, Earl Douglas, readily divined Henry's dissatisfaction, and understood the secret meaning of his frowns and sighs. He hoped much from them, and was firmly resolved to draw some advantage therefrom to the benefit of his daughter, and the harm of the Queen.

Your Majesty, said he, I am just on the point of turning traitor, and accusing my King of an injustice.

The King turned his flashing eyes upon him, and put his hand, sparkling with jeweled rings, to the golden goblet filled with Rhenish wine.

Of an injustice—me—your King? asked he with stammering tongue.

Yes, of an injustice, inasmuch as you are for me God's visible representative on earth. I would blame God if he withdrew from us for a day the brightness of the sun, the gorgeousness and perfume of his flowers, for since we children of men are accustomed to enjoy these glories, we have in a certain measure gained a right to them. So I accuse you because you have withdrawn from us the embodied flowers and the incarnate suns; because you have been so cruel, Sire, as to send the Queen to Epping Forest.

Not so, the Queen wanted to ride, said Henry peevishly. The spring weather attracted her, and since I, alas, do not possess God's exalted attribute of ubiquity, I was no doubt obliged to come to the resolution

of being deprived of her presence. There is no horse capable of carrying the King of England.

There is Pegasus, however, and in masterly manner you know how to manage him. But how, your Majesty? the Queen wanted to ride, though she was deprived of your presence thereby? She wanted to ride, though this pleasure-ride was at the same time a separation from you? Oh how cold and selfish are women's hearts! Were I a woman, I would never depart from your side, I would covet no greater happiness than to be near you, and to listen to that high and exalted wisdom which pours from your inspired lips. Were I a woman——

Earl, I opine that your wish is perfectly fulfilled, said John Heywood seriously. You make in all respects the impression of an old woman!

All laughed. But the King did not laugh; he remained serious and looked gloomily before him.

It is true, muttered he, she seemed excited with joy about this excursion, and in her eyes shone a fire I have seldom seen there. There must be some peculiar circumstance connected with this ride. Who accompanied the Queen?

Princess Elizabeth, said John Heywood, who had heard everything, and saw clearly the arrow that the Earl had shot at the Queen. Princess Elizabeth, her true and dear friend, who never leaves her side. Besides, her maids of honor who, like the dragon in the fable, keep watch over the beautiful Princess.

Who else is in the Queen's company? enquired Henry, sullenly.

The Master of Horse, Earl of Sudley, said Douglas, and——

That was an observation in the highest degree superfluous, interrupted John Heywood; it is perfectly well understood by itself that the Master of Horse accompanies the Queen. That is just as much his office, as it is yours to sing the song of your cousin, my parrot.

He is right! said the King quickly. Thomas Seymour must accompany her, and it is my will also. Thomas Seymour is a faithful servant, and this he has inherited from his sister Jane, my much loved Queen, now at rest with God, that he is devoted to his King in steadfast affection.

The time has not yet come when one may assail the Seymours, thought the Earl. The King is yet attached to them; so he will feel hostile towards the foes of the Seymours. Let us then begin our attack on Henry Howard—that is to say, on the Queen.

Who accompanied the Queen besides? enquired Henry the Eighth, emptying the golden beaker at a single draught, as though he would thereby cool the fire which already began to blaze within him. But the fiery Rhenish wine instead of cooling only heated him yet more; it drove, like a tempest, the fire kindled in his jealous heart in bright flames to his head, and made his brain glow like his heart.

Who else accompanied her besides these? asked Earl Douglas carelessly. Well, I think, the Lord Chamberlain, Earl of Surrey.

A dark scowl gathered on the King's brow. The lion had scented his prey.

The Lord Chamberlain is not in the Queen's train! said John Heywood earnestly.

No! exclaimed Earl Douglas. The poor Earl! That will make him very sad.

And why think you that will make him sad? asked the King in a voice very like the roll of distant thunder.

Because the Earl of Surrey is accustomed to live in the sunshine of royal favor, Sire; because he resembles that flower which always turns its head to the sun, and receives from it vigor, color and brilliancy.

Let him take care that the sun does not scorch him, muttered the King.

Earl, said John Heywood, you must put on your spectacles so that you can see better. This time you have confounded the sun with one of its satellites. Earl Surrey is far too prudent a man to be so foolish as to gaze at the sun, and thereby blind his eyes and parch his brain. And so he is satisfied to worship one of the planets that circle round the sun.

What does the fool intend to say by that? asked the Earl contemptuously.

The wise will thereby give you to understand that you have this time mistaken your daughter for the Queen, said John Heywood, emphasizing sharply every word, and that it has happened to you, as to many a great astrologer, you have taken a planet for a sun.

Earl Douglas cast a dark, spiteful look at John Heywood, who answered it with one equally piercing and furious.

Their eyes were firmly fixed on each others, and in those eyes they both read all the hatred and all the bitterness which were working in the depths of their souls. Both knew that they had from that hour sworn to each other an enmity burning and full of danger.

The King had noticed nothing of this dumb but significant, scene. He was looking down, brooding over his gloomy thoughts, and the storm-clouds rolling around his brow gathered darker and darker.

With an impetuous movement he arose from his seat, and this time he needed no helping hand to stand up. Wrath was the mighty lever that threw him up.

The courtiers arose from their seats in silence, and nobody besides John Heywood observed the look of understanding which Earl Douglas exchanged with Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and Wriothesley, the Lord Chancellor.

Ah, why is not Cranmer here! said John Heywood to himself. I see the three tiger-cats prowling, so there must be prey to devour somewhere. Well, I will at any rate keep my ears open wide enough to hear their roaring.

The dinner is over, gentlemen! said the King hastily; and the courtiers and gentlemen in waiting silently withdrew to the ante-room.

Only Earl Douglas, Gardiner and Wriothesley remained in the hall, while John Heywood crept softly into the King's cabinet and concealed himself behind the hanging of gold brocade, which covered the door leading from the King's study to the outer ante-room.

My Lords, said the King, follow me into my cabinet. As we are dull, the most advisable thing for us to do is to divert ourselves while we occupy ourselves with the weal of our beloved subjects, and consult concerning their happiness and what is conducive to their welfare. Follow me then, and we will hold a general consultation.

Earl Douglas, your arm! and as the King leaned on it and walked slowly towards the cabinet, at the entrance of which the Lord Chancellor and the Bishop of Winchester were waiting for him, he asked in a low voice: You say that Henry Howard dares ever intrude himself into the Queen's presence?

Sire, I did not say that; I meant only that he is constantly to be seen in the Queen's presence.

Oh, you mean that she perhaps authorizes him to do so! said the King, grinding his teeth.

Sire, I hold the Queen to be a noble and dutiful wife.

I should be quite inclined to lay your head at your feet if you did not! said the King, in whose face the first lightning of the bursting cloud of wrath began to flash.

My head belongs to the King! said Earl Douglas respectfully. Let him do with it as he pleases.

But Howard—you mean then that Howard loves the Queen?

Yes, Sire, I dare affirm that.

Now, by the mother of God, I will tread this serpent under my feet, as I did his sister! exclaimed Henry fiercely. The Howards are an ambitious, dangerous and hypocritical race.

A race that never forgets that a daughter of their house has sat on your throne.

But they shall forget it, cried the King, and I must wash these proud and haughty thoughts out of their brain with their own blood. They have not then learnt from the example of their sister, how I punish disloyalty. This insolent race needs another fresh example. Well they shall have it. Only put the means in my hand, Douglas, only a little hook that I can strike into the flesh of these Howards, and I tell you, with that little hook I will drag them to the scaffold. Give me proof of the Earl's criminal love, and I promise you that for this I will grant you what you ask.

Sire, I will give you this proof.

When?

In four days, Sire! At the great contest of the poets which you have ordered to take place on the Queen's birthday.

I thank you, Douglas, I thank you, said the King with an expression almost of joy. In four days you will have rid me of the troublesome race of Howards.

But, Sire, if I cannot give the proof you demand without accusing one other person?

The King, who was just about to pass the door of his cabinet, stood still and looked steadily into the Earl's eyes. Then, said he, in a tone peculiarly awful: you mean the Queen? Well, if she is guilty I will punish her. God has placed the sword in my hand that I may bear it to his honor, and to the terror of mankind. If the Queen has sinned, she will be punished. Furnish me the proof of Howard's guilt, and do not trouble yourself, if we thereby discover the guilt of others. We shall not timidly shrink back, but let justice take its course.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE QUEEN'S FRIEND.

EARL DOUGLAS, Gardiner and Wriothesley had accompanied the King into his cabinet.

At last the great blow was to be struck, and the plan of the three enemies of the Queen, so long matured, and well considered, was to be at length put in execution. Therefore, as they followed the King, who with unwonted activity preceded them, they exchanged with each other one more look of mutual understanding.

By that look Earl Douglas said: The hour has come. Be ready!

And the looks of his friends responded: We are ready!

John Heywood, who, hidden behind the hanging, saw and observed everything, could not forbear a slight shudder at the sight of these four men, whose dark and hard features seemed incapable of being touched by any ray of pity or mercy.

There was first the King, that man with the Protean countenance, across which storm and sunshine, God and the Devil traced each minute new lines; who could be now an inspired enthusiast, and now a blood-thirsty tyrant; now a sentimental wit and anon a wanton reveler; the King, on whose constancy nobody, not even himself, could rely; ever ready, as it suited his caprice or his interest, to betray his most faithful friend, and to send to the scaffold to day those whom but yesterday he had caressed and assured of his unchanging affection;—the King, who considered himself privileged to indulge with impunity his low appetites, his revengeful impulses, his blood-thirsty inclinations; who was devout from vanity, because devotion afforded him an opportunity of indentifying himself with God, and of regarding himself in some sort the patron of Deity.

There was Earl Douglas, the crafty courtier with ever smiling face; who seemed to love everybody, while in fact he hated all; who assumed the appearance of perfect harmlessness and seemed to be indifferent to everything but pleasure, while nevertheless secretly he held in his hand all the strings of that great net, which compassed alike Court and King. Earl Douglas, whom the King loved for this alone, because he generally gave him the title of grand and wise High Priest of the Church, and who was, notwithstanding this, Loyola's vicegerent, and a true and faithful adherent of that Pope who had damned the King as a degenerate son and given him over to the wrath of God.

Lastly there were the two men with dark malignant looks, with inflexible, stony faces, which were never lighted up by a smile, or a gleam of joy; who always condemned, always punished, and whose countenances never brightened save when the dying shriek of the condemned, or the groans of some poor wretch upon the rack fell upon their ears; who were the tormentors of humanity, while they called themselves the ministers and servants of God.

Sire, said Gardiner, when the King had slowly taken his seat upon the ottoman; Sire, let us first ask the blessing of the Lord our God on this hour of conference. May God who is love, but who is wrath also, may he enlighten and bless us!

The King devoutly folded his hands, but it was only a prayer of wrath that animated his soul.

Grant, O God, that I may punish thine enemies, and everywhere dash in pieces the guilty.

Amen! said Gardiner, as he repeated with solemn earnestness the King's words.

Send us the thunderbolt of thy wrath, prayed Wriothesley, that we may teach the world to recognize thy power and glory!

Earl Douglas took care not to pray aloud. What *he* had to request of God was not allowed to reach the ear of the King.

Grant O God, prayed he in his heart, grant that my work may prosper, and that this dangerous Queen may ascend the scaffold, to make room for my daughter, who is destined to bring back into the arms of our Holy Mother, the Church, this guilty and faithless King.

And now, my Lords, said the King fetching a long breath, now tell me how stand matters in my Kingdom, and at my Court.

Badly! said Gardiner. Unbelief again lifts up its head. It is an hydra. If you strike off one of its heads, two others immediately spring up in its place. This cursed sect of reformists and atheists multiplies day by day, and our prisons are no longer sufficient to contain them, and when we drag them to the stake, their joyful and courageous death always makes fresh proselytes, and fresh apostates.

Yes, matters are bad, said the Lord Chancellor Wriothesley; in vain have we promised pardon and forgiveness to all those who would return penitent and contrite; they laugh to scorn our offers of pardon, and prefer a death of torture to the royal clemency. What avails it, that we

have burnt to death Miles Coverdale, who had the hardihood to translate the Bible? His death appears to have been only the tocsin that aroused other fanatics, and without our being able to divine or suspect where all these books come from, they have overflowed and deluged the whole land; and we now already have more than four translations of the Bible. The people read them with eagerness; and the corrupt seed of mental illumination and free-thinking waxes daily more powerful, and more pernicious.

And now you, Earl Douglas? asked the King, when the Lord Chancellor ceased. These noble Lords have told me how matters stand in my Kingdom. You will advise me what is the aspect of things at my Court!

Sire! said Earl Douglas, slowly and solemnly, for he wished each word to sink into the King's breast like a poisoned arrow, Sire, the people but follow the example which the Court sets them. How can you require faith of the people, when under their own eyes, the Court turns faith into ridicule, and when infidels find at Court aid and protection?

You accuse, but you give no names, said the King impatiently. Who dares at my Court be a protector of heretics?

Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury! said the three men, as with one mouth. The signal word was spoken, the standard of a bloody struggle set up. Craumer? repeated the King thoughtfully. He has, however, always been a faithful servant, and an attentive friend to me. It was he who delivered me from the unholy bond with Catharine of Arragon; it was he too who warned me of Catharine Howard, and furnished me with proofs of her guilt. Of what misdemeanor do you accuse him?

He denies the Six Articles, said Gardiner, whose malicious face now glowed with bitter hatred. He reprobates Auricular Confession, and believes not that the voluntarily taken vows of celibacy are binding.

If he does that, then he is a traitor! cried the King, who was fond of always throwing a reverence for chastity and modesty, as a kind of holy mantle, over his own profligate and lewd life; and whom nothing more embittered than to encounter another on that path of vice, which he himself by virtue of his royal prerogative, and his crown by the grace of God, could travel in perfect safety.

If he does that, then he is a traitor! My arm of vengeance will smite him! repeated the King again. It was I, who gave my people the Six Articles, as a sacred and authoritative declaration of faith; and I will not suffer this only true and right doctrine to be assailed and obscured. But you are mistaken, my Lords! I am acquainted with Cranmer and I know that he is loyal and faithful.

And yet it is he, said Gardiner, who confirms these heretics in their obduracy and stiffneckedness. He is the cause why these lost wretches do not, from the fear of divine wrath at least, return to you, their sovereign and high priest. For he preaches to them, that God is love and mercy; he teaches them, that Christ came into the world in order to bring to the world love and the forgiveness of sins, and that they alone are

Christ's true disciples and servants, who emulate his love. Do you not see then, Sire, that this is a covert and indirect accusation against yourself, and that while he praises pardoning love, he at the same time condemns and accuses your righteous and punitive wrath?

The King did not answer immediately, but sat with his eyes fixed grave and pondering. The fanatical priest had gone too far; and without being aware of it, it was he himself, who was that very instant accusing the King.

Earl Douglas felt this. He read in the King's face that he was just then in one of those moments of contrition, which sometimes came over him when his soul held involuntary intercourse with itself.

It was necessary to arouse the sleeping tiger and point out to him some prey, so as to make him again blood-thirsty.

It would be proper, if Cranmer preached only Christian love, said he. Then would he be only a faithful servant of his Lord and a follower of his King. But he gives to the world an abominable example of a disobedient and perfidious servant; he denies the truth of the Six Articles, not in words but in deeds. You have ordered that the priests of the Church remain single. Now, then—the Archbishop of Canterbury is married!

Married? cried the King, his visage glowing with rage. Ah, I will chastise him, this transgressor of my holy laws! A minister of the Church, a priest, whose whole life should be naught but an exhibition of holiness, an endless communion with God, and whose high calling it is to renounce fleshly lusts and earthly desires! And he is married! I will make him feel the whole weight of my royal anger. He shall learn from his own experience that the King's justice is inexorable, and that in every case he smites the head of the sinner; be he who he may.

Your Majesty is the embodiment of wisdom and justice, said Douglas, and your faithful servants well know, if the royal justice is sometimes tardy in smiting guilty offenders, this happens not through your will, but through your servants who venture to stay the arm of justice.

When, and where, has this happened? asked Henry, and his face flushed with rage and excitement. Where is the offender whom I have not punished? Where in my realm lives a being who has sinned against God or his King, and whom I have not dashed to atoms?

Sire, said Gardiner solemnly, Anne Askew is yet alive

She lives to mock at your wisdom and to scoff at your holy creed! cried Wriothesley.

She lives, because Archbishop Cranmer wills that she should not die, said Douglas shrugging his shoulders.

The King broke out into a short, dry laugh. Ah, Cranmer wills not that Anne Askew die! said he sneering. He wills not that this girl, who has so fearfully offended against her King and against God, should be punished!

Yes, she has offended fearfully, and yet two years have passed away

since her offence, cried Gardiner. Two years which she has spent in deriding God and mocking the King.

Ah, said the King, we have still hoped to turn this young, misguided creature from the ways of sin and error to the path of wisdom and repentance. We wished for once to give our people a shining example of our willingness to forgive those who repent and renounce their heresy, and to restore them to a participation of our royal favor. Therefore it was that we commissioned you, my Lord Bishop, by virtue of your prayers and your forcible and convincing words, to pluck this poor child from the claws of the devil, who has charmed her ear.

But she is unbending, said Gardiner, grinding his teeth. In vain have I depicted to her the pains of hell, which await her, if she return not to the faith; in vain have I subjected her to every variety of torture and penance; in vain have I sent to her in prison other converts, and had them pray with her night and day, incessantly; she remains unyielding, hard as stone; and neither the fear of punishment nor the prospect of freedom and happiness have the power to soften that marble heart.

There is one means yet untried, said Wriothesley.—A means, moreover, which is a more effective preacher of repentance than the most enthused orators and the most fervent prayers; and which I have to thank for bringing back to God and the faith, many of the most hardened heretics.

And this means is?

The Rack, your Majesty!

Ah, the Rack! replied the King with an involuntary shudder.

All means are good that lead to the holy end! said Gardiner, devoutly folding his hands.

The soul must be saved, though the body be pierced with wounds! cried Wriothesley.

The people must be convinced, said Douglas, that the lofty spirit of the King spares not even those who are under the protection of influential and mighty personages. The people murmur that this time justice is not permitted to prevail, because Archbishop Cranmer protects Anne Askew, and the Queen is her friend.

The Queen is never the friend of a criminal! said Henry vehemently.

Perchance she does not consider Anne Askew a criminal, responded Earl Douglas with a slight smile. It is known indeed that the Queen is a great friend of the Reformation, and the people, who dare not call her a heretic,—the people call her “the Protestant.”

Is it then really believed that it is Catharine who protects Anne Askew, and keeps her from the stake? inquired the King thoughtfully. It is so thought, your Majesty!

They shall soon see that they are mistaken, and that Henry the Eighth well deserves to be called the Defender of the Faith and the Head of his Church, cried the King with burning rage. For when have I shown myself so long suffering, and weak in punishing, that people believe me inclined to pardon and deal gently? Have I not sent to the scaffold

even Thomas More, and Cromwell, two renowned, and in a certain respect noble and high minded men, because they dared defy my supremacy and oppose the doctrine and ordinance which I commanded them to believe? Have I not sent to the block two of my Queens—two beautiful young women, in whom my heart was well pleased, even when I punished them—because they had provoked my wrath? Who, after such brilliant examples of our annihilating justice, who dare accuse us of forbearance?

But at that time, Sire, said Douglas in his soft, insinuating voice, but at that time no Queen as yet stood at your side, who called heretics true believers and favored traitors with her friendship.

The King frowned, and his wrathful look encountered the friendly and submissive countenance of the Earl. You know I hate these covert attacks, said he. If you can tax the Queen with any crime, well now, do so! If you cannot, hold your peace!

The Queen is a noble and virtuous lady, said the Earl, only she sometimes permits herself to be led away by her magnanimous spirit. Or how, your Majesty—can it possibly be with your permission that my Lady, the Queen, maintains a correspondence with Anne Askew?

What say you? The Queen in correspondence with Anne Askew? cried the King in a voice of thunder. That is a lie, a shameless lie, hatched up to ruin the Queen; for it is very well known that the poor King, who has been so often deceived, so often imposed upon, believes himself to have at last found in this woman a being whom he can trust, and in whom he can put faith. And they grudge him that. They wish to strip him of this last hope also, that his heart may harden entirely to stone, and no emotion of pity evermore find access to him. Ah, Douglas, Douglas, beware of my wrath, if you cannot prove what you say!

Sire, I can prove it! For Lady Jane herself, no longer ago than yesterday, was made to give up a note from Anne Askew to the Queen.

The King remained silent for awhile, and gazed fixedly on the ground. His three confidants observed him with breathless, trembling expectation.

At length the King raised his head again, and turned his gaze, which was now grave and steady, upon the Lord Chancellor.

My Lord Chancellor Wriothesley, said he, I empower you to conduct Anne Askew to the torture-room, and try whether the torments which are prepared for the body are perchance able to bring this erring soul to an acknowledgement of her faults. My Lord Bishop Gardiner, I give my word that I will give attention to your accusation against the Archbishop of Canterbury, and that, if it be well founded, he shall not escape punishment. My Lord Douglas, I will give my people, and all the world, proof that I am still God's righteous and avenging vicegerent on earth, and that no consideration can restrain my wrath, no afterthought stay my arm, whenever it is ready to fall and smite the head of the guilty. And now, my Lords, let us declare this session at an

end. Let us breathe a little from these exertions, and seek some recreation for one brief hour.

My Lords Gardiner and Wriothesley, you are now at liberty. You, Douglas, will accompany me into the small reception-room. I want to see bright and laughing faces around me. Call John Heywood, and if you meet any ladies in the palace, of course, I beg them to shed on us a little of that sunshine, which you say is peculiarly woman's.

He laughed and, leaning on the Earl's arm, left the cabinet.

Gardiner and Wriothesley stood there in silence watching the King, who slowly and heavily traversed the adjacent hall, and whose cheery and laughing voice came ringing back to them.

He is a weather-cock, turning every moment from side to side, said Gardiner with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders.

He calls himself God's sword of vengeance, but he is nothing more than a weak tool, which we bend and use at our will, muttered Wriothesley with a hoarse laugh. Poor, pitiful fool, deeming himself so mighty and sturdy; imagining himself a free King, ruling by his sovereign will alone, and yet he is but our servant and drudge. Our great work is approaching its end, and we shall one day triumph. Anne Askew's death is the sign of a new covenant, which will deliver England and trample the heretics like dust beneath our feet. And when at length we shall have put down Cranmer, and brought Catharine Parr to the scaffold, then will we give King Henry a Queen who will reconcile him with God and the Church, out of which is no salvation.

Amen, so be it! said Gardiner; and arm in arm they both left the cabinet.

Deep stillness now reigned in that little spot, and nobody saw John Heywood as he now came from behind the hanging, and completely worn out and faint, slipped for a moment into a chair.

Now I know, so far at least, the plan of these blood-thirsty tiger-cats, muttered he. They wish to give Henry a popish queen, and so Cranmer must be overthrown, that, when they have deprived the Queen of this powerful prop, they may destroy her also and tread her in the dust. But as God liveth, they shall not succeed in this! God is just, and he will at last punish these evil-doers. And supposing there is no God, then will we try a little with the Devil himself. No, they shall not destroy the noble Cranmer and this beautiful, high-minded Queen. I forbid it—I, John Heywood, the King's fool. I will see everything, observe everything, hear everything. They shall find me everywhere on their path; and when they poison the King's ear with their diabolical whisperings, I will heal it again with my merry deviltries. The King's fool will be the guardian angel of the Queen.

CHAPTER XV

JOHN HEYWOOD.

AFTER so much care and excitement, the King needed an hour of recreation and amusement. Since the fair young Queen was seeking these far away in the chase, and amid the beauties of nature, Henry must, no doubt, be content to seek them for himself, and in a way different from the Queen's. His unwieldiness and his load of flesh prevented him from pursuing the joys of life beyond his own halls; so the lords and ladies of his Court had to bring them hither to him, and station the flitting goddess of joy, with her wings fettered, in front of the King's trundle-chair.

The gout had that day again overcome that mighty King of earth; and a heavy grotesque mass it was, which sat there in the elbow-chair.

But the courtiers still called him a fine looking and fascinating man; and the ladies still smiled on him and said, by their sighs and by their looks, that they loved him; that he was ever to them the same handsome and captivating man that he was twenty years before, when yet young, fine looking and slim. How they smile upon him and ogle him! How Lady Jane, the maiden otherwise so haughty and so chaste, does wish to ensnare him with her bright eyes as with a net! How bewitchingly does the Dutchess of Richmond, that fair and voluptuous woman, laugh at the King's merry jests and double-entendres!

Poor King! whose corpulency forbids him to dance as he once had done with so much pleasure and so much dexterity! Poor King! whose age forbids him to sing as once he had done to the delight both of the Court and of himself!

But there are yet, however, pleasant, precious, joyous hours, when the man revives some little in the King; when even youth once more again awakes within him and smiles in a few dear blessed pleasures.

The King still has at least eyes to perceive beauty, and a heart to feel it.

How beautiful Lady Jane is, this white lily with the dark star-like eyes! How beautiful Lady Richmond, this full-blown red rose with the pearl-white teeth!

And they both smile at him; and when the King swears he loves them, they bashfully cast down their eyes and sigh.

Do you sigh, Jane, because you love me?

Oh, Sire, you mock me. It would be a sin for me to love you, for Queen Catharine is living.

Yes, she is living! muttered the King; and his brow darkened; and for a moment the smile disappeared from his lips.

Lady Jane had committed a mistake. She had reminded the King of his wife, when it was yet too soon to ask for her death.

John Heywood read this in the countenance of his royal master, and resolved to take advantage of it. He wished to divert the attention of the King, and to draw it away from the beautiful, captivating women, who were juggling him with their bewitching charms.

Yes, the Queen lives! said he joyfully, and God be praised for it! For how tedious and dull it would be at this Court had we not our fair Queen, who is wise as Methuselah, and innocent and good as a new-born babe. Do you not, Lady Jane, say with me, God be praised that Queen Catharine is living?

I say so with you! said Jane with ill-concealed vexation.

And you, King Henry, do you not say it too?

Of course, fool!

Ah, why am I not King Henry! sighed John Heywood. King, I envy you not your crown, or your royal mantle; not your attendants, or your money. I envy you only this, that you can say, God be praised that my wife is still alive! while I never know but one phrase: God have pity, my wife is still alive! Ah, it is very seldom, King, that I have heard a married man speak otherwise! You are in that too, as in all things else, an exception, King Henry; and your people have never loved you more warmly and purely than when you say: I thank God that my consort is alive! Believe me, you are perhaps the only man at your Court who speaks after this manner, however ready they may be to be your parrots, and re-echo what the Lord High Priest says.

The only man who loves his wife! said Lady Richmond. Behold now the rude babbler! Do you not believe then that we women deserve to be loved?

I am convinced that you do not!

And for what do you take us then?

For cats, which God, since he had no more cat-skin, stuck into a smooth hide!

Take care, John, that we do not show you our claws! cried the Duchess laughing.

Do it anyhow, my Lady! I will then make a cross and ye will disappear. For devils, you well know, cannot endure the sight of the holy cross, and ye are devils.

John Heywood, who was a remarkably fine singer, seized the mandolin, which lay near him, and began to sing.

It was a song, possible only in those days, and at Henry's voluptuous and at the same time time canting Court. A song full of the most wanton allusions; of the most cutting jests against both Monks and women; a song which made Henry laugh, and the ladies blush; and in which John Heywood had poured forth in glowing dithyrambics, all his secret indignation against Gardiner, the sneaking hypocrite of a priest, and against Lady Jane, the Queen's false and treacherous friend.

But the ladies laughed not. They darted flashing glances at John

Heywood ; and Lady Richmond earnestly and resolutely demanded the punishment of the perfidious wretch who dared to defame woman.

The King laughed still harder. The rage of the ladies was so exceedingly amusing.

Sire, said the beautiful Richmond, he has insulted not us, but the whole sex ; and in the name of our sex, I demand revenge for the affront.

Yes, revenge ! cried Lady Jane hotly.

Revenge ! repeated the rest of the ladies.

See now, what pious and gentle-hearted doves ye are ! cried John Heywood.

The King said laughingly : well now, you shall have your will, you shall chastise him.

Yes, yes, scourge me with rods, as they once scourged the Messiah, because he told the Pharisees the truth. See here, I am already putting on the crown of thorns.

He took the King's velvet cap with solemn air, and put it on.

Yes, whip him, whip him ! cried the King laughing, as he pointed to the gigantic vases of Chinese porcelain, containing enormous bunches of roses, on whose long stems arose a real forest of formidable looking thorns.

Pull the large bouquets to pieces ; take the roses in your hand, and whip him with the stems ! said the King, and his eyes glistened with inhuman delight, for the scene promised to be quite interesting. The rose stems were long and hard, and the thorns on them pointed and sharp as daggers. How nicely they would pierce the flesh, and how he would yell and screw his face, the good natured fool !

Yes, yes, let him take off his coat, and we will whip him ! cried the Duchess of Richmond ; and the women, all joining in the cry, rushed like furies upon John Heywood, and forced him to lay aside his silk upper garment. Then they hurried to the vases, snatched out the bouquets, and with busy hands picked out the longest and stoutest stems. And loud were their exclamations of satisfaction, if the thorns were right large and sharp, such as would penetrate the flesh of the offender right deeply.

The King's laughter and shouts of approval animated them more and more, and made them more excited and furious. Their cheeks glowed, their eyes glared ; they resembled Bacchantes circling the god of riotous joviality with their shouts of Evoe ! Evoe !

Not yet ! do not strike yet ! cried the King. You must first strengthen yourselves for the exertion, and fire your arm for a powerful blow !

He took the large golden beaker which stood before him and, tasting it, presented it to Lady Jane.

Drink, my Lady, drink, that your arm may be strong !

And they all drank, and with animated smiles pressed their lips on the spot which the King's mouth had touched. And now their eyes had a brighter flame, and their cheeks a more fiery glow.

A strange and exciting sight it was, to see those beautiful women

burning with malicious joy and thirst for vengeance, who for the moment had laid aside all their elegant attitudes, their lofty and haughty airs, to transform themselves into wanton *Bachantès*, bent on chastising the offender, who had so often and so bitterly lashed them all with his tongue.

Ah, I would a painter were here, said the King. He should paint us a picture of the chaste nymphs of Diana pursuing *Actæom*. You are *Actæom*, John!

But they are not the chaste nymphs, King; no, far from it, cried Heywood laughing; and between these fair women and Diana I find no resemblance, but only a difference.

And in what consists the difference, John?

Herein, Sire, that Diana carried her horn at her side; but these fair ladies make their husbands wear their horns on the forehead!

A loud peal of laughter from the gentlemen, a yell of rage from the ladies, was the reply to this new epigram of John Heywood.

They arranged themselves in two rows, and thus formed a lane through which John Heywood had to pass

Come, John Heywood, come and receive your punishment; and they raised their thorny rods threateningly, and flourished them with angry gestures high above their heads.

The scene was becoming to John in all respects very *piquant*, for these rods had very sharp thorns, and only a thin batist shirt covered his back.

With bold step, however, he approached the fatal passage through which he was to pass.

Already he beheld the rods drawn back; and it seemed to him as if the thorns were even now piercing his back.

He halted, and turned with a laugh to the King. Sire, since you have condemned me to die by the hands of these nymphs, I claim the right of every condemned criminal—a last favor.

The which we grant you, John?

I demand that I may put on these fair women one condition—one condition on which they may whip me. Does your Majesty grant me this?

I grant it!

And you solemnly pledge me the word of a King that this condition shall be faithfully kept and fulfilled?

My solemn kingly word for it!

Now, then, said John Heywood as he entered the passage, now then, my ladies, my condition is this: That one of you who has had the most lovers, and has oftenest decked her husband's head with horns, let her lay the first stroke on my back.*

A deep silence followed. The raised arms of the fair women sunk. The roses fell from their hands and dropped to the ground. Just before so bloodthirsty and revengeful, they seemed now to have become the softest and gentlest of beings.

* Flögel's Geschichte der Hofnarren, page 599.

But could their looks have killed, their fire certainly would have consumed poor John Heywood, who now gazed at them with an insolent sneer, and advanced into the very midst of their lines.

Now, my ladies, you strike him not? asked the King.

No, your Majesty, we despise him too much even to wish to chastise him, said the Duchess of Richmond.

Shall your enemy who has injured you go thus unpunished? asked the King. No, no, my ladies; it shall not be said that there is a man in my kingdom whom I have let escape when so richly deserving punishment. We will, therefore, impose some other punishment on him. He calls himself a poet, and has often boasted that he could make his pen fly as fast as his tongue! Now, then, John, show us in this manner that you are no liar! I command you to write, for the great Court festival which takes place in a few days, a new interlude, and one indeed, hear you, John, which is calculated to make the greatest growler merry, and over which these ladies will be forced to laugh so heartily that they will forget all their ire!

Oh, said John dolefully, what an equivocal and lewd poem it must be to please these ladies and make them laugh. My King, we must, then, to please these dear ladies, forget a little our chastity, modesty and maiden bashfulness, and speak in the spirit of the ladies—that is to say, as lasciviously as possible.

You are a wretch! said Lady Jane; a vulgar, hypocritical fool.

Earl Douglas, your daughter is speaking to you, said John Heywood calmly. She flatters you much, your tender daughter.

Now then, John, you have heard my orders, and will you obey them? In four days will this festival begin; I give you two days more. In six days, then, you have to write a new interlude. And if he fails to do it, my ladies, you shall whip him until you bring the blood; and that without any condition.

Just then was heard without, a flourish of trumpets and the clatter of horse-hoofs.

The Queen has returned, said John Heywood with a countenance beaming with joy, as he fixed his smiling gaze full of mischievous satisfaction on Lady Jane. Nothing further now remains for you to do, but dutifully to meet your mistress upon the great stair-case, for as you so wisely said before, *the Queen still lives*.

Without waiting for an answer, John Heywood ran out and rushed through the ante-room and down the steps to meet the Queen. Lady Jane watched him with a dark, angry look; and as she turned slowly to the door to go and meet the Queen, she muttered low between her closely pressed lips: The fool must die, for he is the Queen's friend.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CONFIDANT.

THE Queen was just ascending the steps of the great public staircase, and she greeted John Heywood with a friendly smile.

My Lady, said he aloud, I have a few words in private to say to you in the name of his Majesty.

Words in private! repeated Catharine, as she stopped upon the terrace of the palace. Well then, fall back, my lords and ladies, we wish to receive his Majesty's mysterious message.

The royal train silently and respectfully withdrew into the large ante-room of the palace, while the Queen remained alone with John Heywood on the terrace.

Now speak, John.

Queen, heed well my words, and grave them deep on your memory! A conspiracy is forged against you, and in a few days, at the great festival, it will be ripe for execution. Guard well, therefore, every word you utter, aye, even your very thoughts. Beware of every dangerous step, for you may be certain that a listener stands behind you! And if you need a confidant, confide in no one but me! I tell you a great danger lies before you, and only by prudence and presence of mind will you be able to avoid it.

This time the Queen did not laugh at her friend's warning voice. She was serious; she even trembled.

She had lost her proud sense of security and her serene confidence—she was no longer guiltless—she had a dangerous secret to keep, consequently she felt a dread of discovery; and she trembled not merely for herself, but also for him whom she loved.

And in what consists this plot? asked she with agitation.

I do not yet understand it; I only know that it exists. But I will search it out, and if your enemies lurk about you with watchful eyes, well then, I will have spying eyes to observe them.

And is it I alone that they threaten?

No, Queen, your friend also.

Catharine trembled. What friend, John?

Archbishop Cranmer.

Ah, the Archbishop! replied she, drawing a deep breath. And is he all, John? Does their enmity pursue only me and him?

Only you two! said John Heywood sadly, for he had fully understood the Queen's sigh of relief, and he knew that she had trembled for another. But remember, Queen, that Cranmer's destruction would be

likewise your own, and that as you protect the Archbishop, he also will protect you with the King—you, Queen, and your *friends*.

Catharine gave a slight start; and the crimson on her cheek grew deeper.

I shall always be mindful of that, and ever be a true and real friend to him and to you; for you two are my only friends. Is it not so?

No, your Majesty, I spoke to you of yet a third, of Thomas Seymour.

Oh, he! cried she with a sweet smile. Then she said suddenly, and in a low quick voice: you say that I must trust no one here but you. Now then, I will give you a proof of my confidence. Await me in the green summer house at twelve o'clock to-night. You must be my attendant on a dangerous excursion. Have you courage, John?

Courage to lay down my life for you, Queen!

Come then, but bring your weapon with you.

At your command! and is that your only order for to day?

That is all, John! only, added she, with hesitation and a slight blush, only, if you perchance meet Earl Sudley, you may say to him that I charged you to greet him in my name.

Oh! sighed John Heywood sadly.

He has to-day saved my life, John, said she, as if excusing herself. It becomes me well, then, to be grateful to him.

And giving him a friendly nod, she stepped into the porch of the castle.

Now let any body say again, that chance is not the most mischievous and spiteful of all devils! muttered John Heywood. This devil, chance, throws in the Queen's way the very person she ought most to avoid; and she must be, as in duty bound, very grateful to a lover. Oh, oh, so he has saved her life. But who knows whether he may not be one day the cause of her losing it!

He dropped his head gloomily upon his breast, when suddenly he heard behind him a low voice calling his name; and, as he turned, he saw the young Princess Elizabeth hastening towards him with hurried step.

She was at that moment very beautiful. Her eyes gléamed with the fire of passion; her cheeks glowed; and about her crimson lips there played a gentle, happy smile. She wore, according to the fashion of the time, a close-fitting high-necked dress, which showed off to perfection the delicate lines of her slender and youthful form, while the wide standing collar concealed the somewhat too great length of her neck, and made her ruddy, as yet almost childish, face stand out as it were from a pedestal. On either side of her high, thoughtful brow, fell, in luxurious profusion, light flaxen curls; her head was covered with a black velvet cap, from which a white feather drooped to her shoulders.

She was altogether a charming and lovely apparition, full of nobleness and grace, full of fire and energy; and yet in spite of her youthfulness, not wanting in a certain grandeur and dignity. Elizabeth, though still almost a child, and frequently bowed and humbled by misfortune,

yet ever remained her father's own daughter. And though Henry had declared her a bastard and excluded her from the succession to the throne, yet she bore the stamp of her royal blood in her high, haughty brow, in her keen, flashing eye.

As she now stood before John Heywood, she was not, however, the haughty, imperious Princess, but merely the shy, blushing maiden, who feared to entrust her first girlish secret to another's ear, and ventured only with trembling hand to draw aside the veil which concealed her heart.

John Heywood, said she, you have often told me that you loved me ; and I know that my poor unfortunate mother trusted you, and summoned you as a witness of her innocence. You could not at that time save the mother, but will you now serve Anne Boleyn's daughter, and be her faithful friend ?

I will, said Heywood solemnly, and as true as there is a God above us, you shall never find me a traitor.

I believe you, John ; I know that I may trust you. Listen then, I will now tell you my secret—a secret which no one but God knows, and the betrayal of which might bring me to the scaffold. Will you then swear to me, that you will never, under any pretext, and from any motive whatsoever, betray to any body, so much as a single word of what I am now about to tell you ? Will you swear to me, never to entrust this secret to any one, even on your death-bed, and not to betray it, even in the confessional ?

Now, as regards that, Princess, said John with a laugh, you are perfectly safe. I never go to confession, for confession is a highly spiced dish of popery on which I long since spoilt my stomach ; and as concerns my death bed, one cannot, under the blessed and pious reign of Henry the Eighth, altogether know whether he will be really a participant of any thing of the kind, or whether he may not make a far more speedy and convenient trip into eternity by the aid of the hangman.

Oh, be serious, John—do, I pray you ! Let the fool's mask, under which you hide your sober and honest face, not hide it from me also. Be serious, John, and swear to me that you will keep my secret.

Well then, I swear, Princess ; I swear by your mother's spirit to betray not a word of what you are going to tell me.

I thank you, John. Now lean this way nearer to me, lest the breeze may catch a single word of mine and bear it farther. John,—I love !

She saw the half-surprised, half-incredulous smile which played around John Heywood's lips. Oh, continued she passionately, you believe me not. You consider my fourteen years, and you think the child knows nothing yet of a maiden's feelings. But remember, John, that those girls who live under a warm sun are early ripened by his glowing rays, and are already wives and mothers when they should still be dreaming children. Well now, I too am the daughter of a torrid zone, only mine has not been the sun of prosperity, and it has been sorrow and misfortune which have matured my heart. Believe me, John, I love ! A

glowing, consuming fire rages within me; it is at once my delight and my misery, my happiness and my future.

The King has robbed me of a brilliant and glorious future; let them not then begrudge me a happy one at least. Since I am never to be a queen, I will at least be a happy and beloved wife. If I am condemned to live in obscurity and lowliness, at the very least I must not be prohibited from adorning this obscure and inglorious existence with flowers, which thrive not at the foot of the throne; and to illuminate it with stars more sparkling than the refulgence of the most radiant kingly crown.

Oh, you are mistaken about your own self! said John Heywood sorrowfully. You chose the one only because the other is denied. You would love only because you cannot rule, and since your heart, which thirsts for fame and honor, can find no other satisfaction, you would quench its thirst with some other draught, and would administer love as an opiate to lull to rest its burning pains. Believe me, Princess, you do not yet know yourself! You were not born to be merely a loving wife; and your brow is much too high and haughty to wear only a crown of myrtle! Therefore, consider well what you do, Princess! Be not carried away by your father's passionate blood, which boils in your veins also. Think well before you act. Your foot is yet on one of the steps to the throne. Draw it not back voluntarily! Maintain your position; then, the next step brings you again one stair higher up. Do not voluntarily renounce your just claim, but abide in patience the coming of the day of retribution and justice. Only do not yourself make it impossible, that there may then be a full and glorious reparation. *Princess Elizabeth* may yet one day be Queen, provided she has not exchanged her name for one less glorious and noble.

John Heywood, said she with a bewitching smile, I have told you, I love him.

Well, love him as much as you please, but do it in silence, and tell him not of it; but teach your love resignation.

John, he knows it already!

Ah, poor Princess, you are still but a child, that sticks its hands in the fire with smiling bravery and scorches them, because it knows not that fire burns.

Let it burn, John, burn! and let the flames curl over my head. Better be consumed in fire than perish slowly and horribly with a deadly chill! I love him, I tell you, and he already knows it.

Well then love him, but at least do not marry him! cried John Heywood surlily.

Marry! cried she with astonishment. Marry! I had never thought of it.

She dropped her head upon her breast; and stood there silent and thoughtful.

I am much afraid I made a blunder then! muttered John Heywood. I have suggested a new thought to her. Ah, ah, King Henry has done well in appointing me his fool. Just when we deem ourselves the wisest, we are the greatest fools!

John, said Elizabeth, as she raised her head again, and smiled to him in a glow of excitement, John, you are entirely right; if we love, we must marry.

But I said just the contrary, Princess!

All right! said she resolutely. All this belongs to the future; we will busy ourselves with the present. I have promised my lover an interview.

An interview! cried John Heywood in amazement. You will not be so fool-hardy as to keep your promise?

John Heywood, said she, with an air of approaching solemnity, King Henry's daughter will never make a promise without fulfilling it. For better or for worse I will always keep my plighted word, even if the greatest misery and ruin were the result.

John Heywood ventured to offer no further opposition. There was at this moment something peculiarly lofty, proud and truly royal in her air, which impressed him with awe, and before which he bowed.

I have granted him an interview because he wished it, said Elizabeth, and, John, I will confess it to you, my own heart longed for it. Seek not, then, to shake my resolution; it is as firm as a rock. But if you are not willing to stand by me, say so; and I will then look about me for another friend, who loves me enough to impose silence on his thoughts.

But who, perhaps, will go and betray you. No, no, it has been once resolved upon and unalterably; so no one but I must be your confidant. Tell me, then, what I am to do, and I will obey you.

You know, John, that my apartments are situated in yonder wing, overlooking the garden. Well, in my dressing-room, behind one of the large wall pictures, I have discovered a door leading into a lonely, dark corridor. From this corridor there is a passage up into yonder tower. It is unoccupied and deserted. Nobody ever thinks of entering that part of the castle; and the quiet of the grave reigns throughout those apartments, which nevertheless are furnished with a magnificence truly regal. There will I receive him!

But how shall he make his way thither?

Oh, do not be concerned, I have thought over that many days since; and while I was refusing my lover the interview for which he again and again implored me, I was quietly preparing everything so as to be able one day to grant it to him. To-day this object is attained, and to-day have I fulfilled his wish, voluntarily and unasked; for I saw he had no more courage to ask again. Listen, then. From the tower, a spiral staircase leads down to a small door, through which you gain entrance into the garden. I have a key to this door. Here it is. Once in possession of this key, he has nothing further to do but remain behind in the park this evening, instead of leaving the castle; and by means of this, he will come to me; for I will wait for him in the tower—in the large room directly opposite the staircase landing. Here, take the key; give it to him, and repeat to him all that I have said.

Well, Princess! there remains for you now only to appoint the hour at which you will receive him there.

The hour, said she, as she turned away her blushing face. You understand, John, that it is not feasible to receive him there by day, because there is by day not a single moment in which I am not watched.

You will then receive him by night! said John Heywood sadly. At what hour?

At midnight! And now you know all; and I beg you, John, hasten and carry him my message; for, look, the sun is setting, and it will soon be night.

She nodded to him with a smile and turned to go.

Princess, you have forgotten the most important point. You have not yet told me his name.

My God! and you do not guess it? John Heywood, who has such sharp eyes, sees not that there is at this Court but a single one who deserves to be loved by a daughter of the King!

And the name of this single one is?

Thomas Seymour, Earl of Sudley! whispered Elizabeth as she turned away quickly and entered the castle.

Oh, Thomas Seymour! said John Heywood, utterly astounded. As if paralyzed with horror, he stood there motionless, staring up at the sky and repeating over and over, Thomas Seymour! Thomas Seymour! So he is a sorcerer who administers a love-potion to all the women, and befools them with his handsome, saucy face. Thomas Seymour! The Queen loves him; the Princess loves him; and then there is this Duchess of Richmond, who will by all means be his wife! This much however is certain, he is a traitor who deceives both, because to both he has made the same confession of love. And there again is that imp, chance, which compels me to be the confidant of both these women. But I will be well on my guard against executing both my commissions to this sorcerer. Let him at any rate become the husband of the Princess; perhaps this would be the surest means of freeing the Queen from her unfortunate love.

He was silent and still gazed up thoughtfully at the sky. Yes, said he then, quite cheerfully, thus shall it be. I will combat the one love with the other. For the Queen to love him, is dangerous. I will therefore so conduct matters, that she must hate him. I will remain her confidant. I will receive her letters and her commissions, but I will burn her letters and not execute her commissions. I am not at liberty to tell her that the faithless Thomas Seymour is false to her, for I have solemnly pledged my word to the Princess never to breathe her secret to any one; and I will and must keep my word. Smile and love then; dream on thy sweet dream of love, Queen; I wake for thee; I will cause the dark cloud resting on thee to pass by. It may, perhaps, touch thine heart; but thy noble and beautiful head—that at least it shall not be allowed to crush; that——

Now then, what are you staring up at the sky for, as if you read

there a new epigram with which to make the King laugh, and the parsons rave? asked a voice near him; and a hand was laid heavily on his shoulder.

John Heywood did not look round at all; he remained in the same attitude, gazing up steadily at the sky. He had very readily recognized the voice of him who had addressed him; he knew very well that he who stood near him was no other than the bold sorcerer, whom he was just then cursing at the bottom of his heart; no other than Thomas Seymour, Earl of Sudley.

Say, John, is it really an epigram? asked Thomas Seymour again. An epigram on the hypocritical, lustful and sanctimonious priestly rabble, that with blasphemous hypocrisy fawn about the King, and are ever watching how they can set a trap for one of us honorable and brave men! Is that what heaven is now revealing to you?

No, my Lord, I am only looking at a hawk which hovers about there in the clouds. I saw him mount, Earl, and only think of the wonder; he had in each talon a dove. Two doves for one hawk. Is not that too much—wholly contrary to law and nature?

The Earl cast on him a penetrating and distrustful look. But John Heywood, remaining perfectly calm and unembarrassed, continued looking at the clouds.

How stupid such a brute is, and how much to his disadvantage will his very greediness be. For since he holds a dove in each claw, he will not be able to enjoy either of them; because he has no claw at liberty with which to tear them. Soon as he wishes to enjoy the one, the other will escape; when he grabs after that, the other flies away; and so at last he will have nothing at all, because he was too rapacious and wanted more than he could use.

And you are looking after this hawk in the skies? But you are perhaps mistaken, and he whom you seek is not above there at all, but here below, and perchance quite close to you? asked Thomas Seymour significantly.

But John Heywood would not understand him.

Nay, said he, he still flies, but it will not last long. For verily I saw the owner of the dovecot from which the hawk has stolen the two doves. He had a weapon; and he, be ye sure of it—he will kill this hawk, because he has robbed him of his pet doves.

Enough, enough! cried the Earl impatiently. You would give me a lesson, but you must know I take no counsel from a fool, even were he the wisest.

In that you are right, my Lord, for only fools are so foolish as to hearken to the voice of wisdom. Besides each man forges his own fortune. And now, wise sir, I will give you a key, which you yourself have forged, and behind which lies your fortune. There, take this key; and if you at midnight slip through the garden to the tower over yonder, this key will open to you the door of the same, and you can then without hesitation mount the spiral staircase and open the door which is

opposite the staircase. Behind that you will find the fortune which you have forged for yourself, sir blacksmith, and which will bid you welcome with warm lips and soft arms. And so commending you to God, I must hasten home to think over the comedy which the King has commanded me to write.

But you do not so much as tell me from whom this message comes? said Earl Sudley, retaining him. You invite me to a meeting and give me a key, and I know not who will await me there in that tower.

Oh, you do not know? There is then more than one who *might* await you there? Well then, it is the youngest and smallest of the two doves who sends you the key.

Princess Elizabeth?

You have named her, not I! said John Heywood as he disengaged himself from the Earl's grasp and hurried across the Court-yard to betake himself to his lodgings.

Thomas Seymour watched him with a scowl, and then slowly directed his eyes to the key that Heywood had given him.

The Princess then awaits me, whispered he softly. Ah, who can read it in the stars; who can know whither the crown will roll when it tumbles from King Henry's head. I love Catharine, but I love ambition still more; and if it is demanded, to ambition must I sacrifice my heart.

CHAPTER XVII.

GAMMER GURTON'S NEEDLE.

SLOWLY and lost in gloomy thought, John Heywood walked towards his lodgings. These lodgings were situated in the second or inner court of the vast palace of Whitehall; in that wing of the castle which contained the apartments of all the higher officers of the royal household, and so those of the Court-jesters also; for the King's fool was at that period a very important and respectable personage, who occupied a rank equal to that of a gentleman of the royal bed-chamber.

John Heywood had just crossed this second court-yard, when all at once loud wrangling voices, and the clear peculiar ring of a box on the ear, startled him out of his meditations.

He stopped and listened.

His face, before so serious, had now re-assumed its usual merry and shrewd expression; his large eyes again glittered with humor and mischief.

There again verily is my sweet, charming housekeeper, Gammer Gur-

ton, said John Heywood laughing; and she no doubt is quarreling again with my excellent servant, that poor, long-legged, blear-eyed Hodge. Ah! ha! Yesterday I surprised her as she applied a kiss to him, at which he made as doleful a face as if a bee had stung him. To-day I hear now she is boxing his ears. He is perhaps now laughing at it, and thinks it is a rose-leaf which cools his cheek. That Hodge is such a queer bird! But we will at once see what there is to-day, and what farce is being performed now.

He crept softly up the stairs, and opening the door of his room, closed it again behind him quickly and gently.

Gammer Gurton, who was in the room adjoining, had heard nothing, seen nothing; and had the heavens come tumbling down at that moment, she would have scarcely noticed it; for she had eyes and sense only for this long, lank lackey who stood before her shaking with fear, and staring at her out of his great bluish-white eyes. Her whole soul lay in her tongue; and her tongue ran as fast as a mill-wheel and with the force of thunder.

How then could Gammer Gurton well have time and ears to hear her master, who had softly entered his chamber and softly crept to the door, only half closed, which separated his room from that of the house-keeper.

How! screamed Gammer Gurton, you silly ragamuffin, you wish to make me believe that it was the cat that ran away with my sewing needle, as if my sewing needle were a mouse and smelt of bacon, you stupid blear-eyed fool!

Ah, you call me a fool, cried Hodge with a laugh, which caused his mouth to describe a graceful line across his face from ear to ear; you call me a fool, and that is a great honor for me, for then I am a servant worthy of my master. And as to being blear-eyed, that must be caused by the simple fact that I have nothing all day long before my eyes but you, Gammer Gurton—you with your face like a full moon—you sailing through the room like a frigate, and with your grappling-irons, your hands, smashing to pieces everything except your own looking-glass.

You shall pay me for that, you double-faced, thread-bare lout! screamed Gammer Gurton, as she rushed on Hodge with clenched fist.

But John Heywood's cunning servant had anticipated this; he had already slipped under the large table which stood in the middle of the room. As the house-keeper now made a plunge to drag him out of his extemporary fortress, he gave her such a hearty pinch on the leg, that she sprang back with a scream, and sank, wholly overcome by the pain, into the huge, leather-covered elbow-chair which was near her workstand at the window.

You are a monster, Hodge, groaned she, exhausted. A heartless, horrible monster. You have stolen my sewing needle—you only. For you knew very well that it was my last one, and that if I have not that, I must go at once to the shop-keeper to buy some needles. And that is

just what you want, you weather-cock, you. You only want me to go out, that you may have an opportunity to play with Tib.

Tib? Who is Tib? asked Hodge as he stretched out his long neck from under the table, and stared at Gammer Gurton with well assumed astonishment.

Now this otter wants me yet to tell him who Tib is! screamed the exasperated Dame. Well then, I will tell you. Tib is the cook of the Major Domo over there—a black-eyed, false, coquettish little devil, who is bad and mean enough to troll away the lover of an honest and virtuous woman, as I am; a lover who is such a pitiful little thing that one would think no one but myself could find him out and see him; nor could I have done it had I not now for forty years trained my eyes to the search, and for forty years looked around for the man who was at length to marry me, and make me a respectable mistress. Since my eyes then were at last steadily fixed on this phantom of man, and I found nothing there, I finally discovered you, you cobweb of a man!

What! you call me a cobweb? screamed Hodge as he crept from under the table and drawing himself up to his full height, placed himself threateningly in front of Gammer Gurton's elbow-chair. You call me a cobweb? Now I swear to you that you shall henceforth never more be the spider that dwells in that web. For you are a garden-spider, an abominable, dumpy, old garden-spider, for whom a web, such as Hodge is, is much too fine and much too elegant. Be quiet, therefore, old spider, and spin your net elsewhere! You shall not live in my net, but Tib—for, yes, I do know Tib. She is a lovely, charming child of fourteen, as quick and nimble as a kid, with lips red as the coral which you wear on your fat pudding of a neck, with eyes which shine yet brighter than your nose, and with a figure so slender and graceful that she might have been carved out of one of your fingers. Yes, yes, I know Tib. She is an affectionate, good child, who would never be so hard-hearted as to abuse the man she loves, and could not be so mean and pitiful, even in thought, as to wish to marry the man she did not love, just because he is a man. Yes, I know Tib, and now I will go straight to her and ask her if she will marry a good, honest lad, who, to be sure, is somewhat lean, but who doubtless will become fatter if he has any other fare than the meagre, abominable stuff on which Gammer Gurton feeds him; a lad who, to be sure, is blear-eyed, but will soon get over that disease when he no more sees Gammer Gurton, who acts on his eyes like a stinking onion, and makes them always red and running water. Good-bye, old onion, I am going to Tib.

But Gammer Gurton whirled up out of her elbow-chair like a top, and was upon Hodge, whom she held by the coat-tail, and brought him to a stand.

You dare go to Tib again! You dare pass that door and you shall see that the gentle, peaceable and patient Gammer Gurton is changed into a lioness, when any one tries to tear from her that most sacred and

dearest of treasures, her husband. For you are my husband, inasmuch as I have your word that you will marry me.

But I have not told you when and where I will do it, Gammer Gurton; and so you can wait to all eternity, for only in heaven will I be your husband.

That is an abominable, malicious lie! screamed Gammer Gurton. A good for nothing lie, say I! For did you not long ago snivel and beg till I was forced to promise you to make a will, and in it declare Hodge, my beloved husband, sole heir of all my goods and chattels, and bequeath to him everything I have scraped together in my virtuous and industrious life?

But you did not make it,—the will. You broke your word; and, therefore, I will do the same.

Yes, I have made it, you greyhound. I have made it; and this very day I was going with you to the justice of the peace and have it signed, and then to-morrow we would have got married.

You have made the will, you round world of love? said Hodge tenderly, as with his long, withered, spindling arms he tried to clasp the gigantic waist of his beloved. You have made the will and declared me your heir? Come, then, Gammer Gurton, come, let us go to the justice of the peace!

But do you not see, then, said Gammer Gurton, with a tender cat-like purr, do you not see, then, that you rumple my frill when you hug me so? Let me go, then, and help me find my needle quickly, for without the needle we cannot go to the justice of the peace.

What, without the needle not go to the justice of the peace?

No; for only see this hole which Gib, the cat, tore in my prettiest cap awhile ago, as I took the cap out of the box and laid it on the table. Indeed I cannot go to the justice of the peace with such a hole in my cap! Search then, Hodge, search, so that I can mend my cap, and go with you to the justice of the peace!

Lord God, where in the world can it be, the unlucky needle! I must have it, I must find it, so that Gammer Gurton may take her will to the justice of the peace!

And in frantic desperation, Hodge searched all about on the floor for the lost needle, and Gammer Gurton stuck her large spectacles on her flaming red nose and peered about on the table. So eager was she in the search, that she even let her tongue rest a little, and deep silence reigned in the room.

Suddenly this silence was broken by a voice, which seemed to come from the court yard. It was a soft, sweet voice that cried: Hodge, dear Hodge, are you there? Come to me in the court, only for a few minutes! I want to have a bit of a laugh with you!

It was as though an electric shock had passed through the room with that voice, and struck at the same time both Gammer Gurton and Hodge.

Both startled, and discontinuing the search, stood there wholly immovable, as if petrified.

Hodge especially, poor Hodge, was as if struck by lightning. His great bluish-white eyes appeared to be coming out of their sockets; his long arms hung down, flapping and dangling about like a flail; his knees, half bent, seemed already to be giving way in expectation of the approaching storm.

This storm did not in fact make him wait long.

That is Tib! screamed Gammer Gurton, springing like a lioness upon Hodge and seizing him by the shoulders with both her hands. That is Tib, you thread-like, pitiful greyhound! Well, was I not right, now, when I called you a faithless, good for nothing scamp, that spares not innocence, and breaks the hearts of the women as he would a cracker, which he swallows down at his pleasure? Was I not right, in saying that you were only watching for me to go out in order to go and sport with Tib?

Hodge, my dear, darling Hodge, cried the voice beneath there, and this time louder and more tender than before. Hodge, oh come, do now, come to me in the court, as you promised me; come and get the kiss for which you begged me this morning!

I will be a damned otter, if I begged her for it, and if I understand a single word of what she says, said Hodge, wholly dumbfounded and quaking all over.

Ah, you understand not a word of what she says? screamed Gammer Gurton. Well, but I understand it. I understand that everything between us is past and done with, and that I have nothing more to do with you, you Moloch you. I understand that I shall not go and make my will, to become your wife and fret myself to death over this skeleton of a husband, that I may leave you to chuckle as my heir. No, no, it is past. I am not going to the justice of the peace, and I will tear up my will!

Oh, she is going to tear up her will! howled Hodge; and then I have tormented myself in vain; in vain have endured the horrible luck of being loved by this old owl! Oh, oh, she will not make her will, and Hodge will remain the same miserable dog he always was.

Gammer Gurton laughed scornfully. Ah, you are aware at last what a pitiful wretch you are, and how much a noble and handsome person, as I am, lowered herself when she made up her mind to pick up such a weed and make him her husband.

Yes, yes, I know it! whined Hodge; and I pray you pick me up and take me, and above all things make your will!

No, I will not take you, and I shall not make my will! It is all over with, I tell you; and now you can go as soon as you please to Tib, who has called you so lovingly. But first give me back my sewing-needle, you magpie, you! Give me here my sewing-needle, which you have stolen. It is of no use to you now, for it is not necessary for me to go out in order that you may go and see Tib. We have nothing more

to do with each other, and you can go where you wish. My sewing-needle, say I—my needle, or I will hang you up as a scarecrow in my pea-patch, to frighten the sparrows out of it. My sewing-needle, or——

She shook her clenched fist threateningly at Hodge, fully convinced that now, as always before, Hodge would retreat before this menacing weapon of his jealous and irritable ladylove, and seek safety under the bed or the table.

This time, however, she was mistaken. Hodge, who saw that all was lost, felt that his patience was at length exhausted; and his timidity was now changed to the madness of despair. The lamb was transformed into a tiger, and with a tiger's rage he pounced upon Gammer Gurton, and throwing aside her fist, he dealt her a good sound blow on the cheek.

The signal was given, and the battle begun. It was waged by both sides with equal animosity and equal vigor; only Hodge's bony hand made by far the most telling blows on Gammer Gurton's mass of flesh, and was always certain, wherever he struck, to hit some spot of this huge mass; while Gammer Gurton's soft hand seldom touched that thin, thread-like figure, which dexterously parried every blow.

Stop, you fools! suddenly shouted a stentorian voice. See you not, you goblins, that your lord and master is here? Peace, peace then, you devils, and do not be hammering away at one another, but love each other.

It is the master! exclaimed Gammer Gurton, lowering her fist in the utmost contrition.

Do not turn me away, sir, moaned Hodge; do not dismiss me from your service because at last I have for once given the old hag a good bruising. She has deserved it a long time, and an angel himself must at last lose patience with her.

I turn you out of my service? exclaimed John Heywood as he wiped his eyes, wet with laughing. No, Hodge, you are a real jewel, a mine of fun and merriment; and you two have, without knowing it, furnished me with the choicest materials for a piece which, by the King's order, I have to write within six days. I owe you, then, many thanks, and will show my gratitude forthwith. Listen well to me, my amorous and tender pair of turtle doves, and mark what I have to say to you. One cannot always tell the wolf by his hide, for he sometimes puts on a sheep's skin; and so, too, a man cannot always be recognized by his voice, for he sometimes borrows that of his neighbor. Thus, for example, I know a certain John Heywood, who can mimic exactly the voice of a certain little miss named Tib, and knows how to warble as sweetly as she herself: "Hodge, my dear Hodge!"

And he repeated to them exactly, and with the same tone and expression, the words that the voice had previously cried.

Ah, it was you, sir? cried Hodge with a broad grin—that Tib in the court there, that Tib about whom we have been pummeling each other?

I was that Tib, Hodge—I who was present during the whole of your

quarrel, and found it hugely comical to send Tib's voice thundering into the midst of your lovers' quarrel, like a cannon stroke! Ah, ha. Hodge, that was a fine bomb shell, was it not? And as I said "Hodge, my dear Hodge," you tumbled about like a kernel of corn which a dung-beetle blows with his breath. No, no, my worthy and virtuous Gammer Gurton, it was not Tib who called the handsome Hodge, and more than that, I saw Tib, as your contest began, go out at the court-yard gate.

It was not Tib, exclaimed Gammer Gurton, much moved, and happy as love could make her. It was not Tib, and she was not in the court at all, and Hodge could not then go down to her, while I went to the shop-keeper's to buy needles. Oh, Hodge, Hodge, will you forgive me for this; will you forget the hard words which I spoke in the fury of my anguish, and can you love me again?

I will try, said Hodge gravely; and, without doubt, I shall succeed, provided you go to-day forthwith to the justice, and make your will.

I will make my will, and to-morrow we will go to the priest; shall it not be so, my angel?

Yes, we go to the priest to-morrow! growled Hodge, as with a frightful grimace he scratched himself behind the ears.

And now come, my angel, and give me a kiss of reconciliation!

She spread her arms out, and when Hodge did not come to her, but remained immovable and steadfast in his position, she went to Hodge and pressed him tenderly to her heart.

Suddenly she uttered a shriek, and let go of Hodge. She had felt a terrible pain in her breast. It seemed as though a small dagger had pierced her bosom.

And there it was, the lost needle, and Hodge then was innocent and pure as the early dawn.

He had not mischievously purloined the needle, so that Gammer Gurton would be compelled to leave her house in order to fetch some new needles from the shop-keepers; he had not intended to go to Tib, for Tib was not in the court, but had gone out.

Oh, Hodge, Hodge, good Hodge, you innocent dove, will you forgive me?

Come to the justice of the peace, Gammer Gurton, and I forgive you!

They sank tenderly into each others' arms, wholly forgetful of their master, who still stood near them, and looked on, laughing and nodding his head.

Now then, I have found the finest and most splendid materials for my piece, said John Heywood, as he left the loving pair and betook himself to his own room. Gammer Gurton has saved me, and King Henry will not have the satisfaction of seeing me whipped by those most virtuous and most lovely ladies of his Court. To work then, straightway to work!

He seated himself at his writing desk, and seized a pen and paper.

But how? asked he, suddenly pausing. That is certainly a rich sub-

ject for a composition ; but I can never in the world get an interlude out of it ! What shall I do with it ? Abandon this subject altogether, and again jeer at the monks and ridicule the nuns ? That is antiquated and worn out ! I will write something new, something wholly new, and something which will make the King so merry, that he will not sign a death-warrant for a whole day. Yes, yes, a merry play shall it be, and then I will call it boldly and fearlessly a comedy !

He seized his pen and wrote : *Gammer Gurton's Needle, a right pithy, pleasant and merry Comedy.*

And thus originated the first English Comedy, by John Heywood, fool to King Henry the Eighth.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

LADY JANE.

ALL was quiet in the palace of Whitehall. Even the servants on guard in the vestibule of the King's bed-chamber had been a long time slumbering, for the King had been snoring for several hours ; and this majestic sound was, to the dwellers in the palace, the joyful announcement that for one fine night they were exempt from service, and might be free men.

The Queen also had long since retired to her apartments, and dismissed her ladies at an unusually early hour. She felt, she said, wearied by the chase, and much-needed rest. No one, therefore, was to venture to disturb her, unless the King should order it.

But the King, as we have said, slept, and the Queen had no reason to fear that her night's rest would be disturbed.

Deep silence reigned in the palace. The corridors were empty and deserted, the apartments all silent.

Suddenly a figure tripped along softly and cautiously through the long feebly lighted corridor. She was wrapped in a black mantle ; a veil concealed her face.

Scarcely touching the floor with her feet, she floated away, and glided down a little staircase. Now she stops and listens. There is nothing to hear ; all is noiseless and still.

Then on again. Now she wings her steps. For here she is sure of

* This Comedy was first printed in the year 1661, but it was represented at Christ College fully a hundred years previously. Who was the author of it, is not known with certainty ; but it is possible that the writer of it was John Heywood, the epigrammatist and Court-jester. See *Dramaturgie, oder Theorie und Geschichte der dramatischen Kunst*, von Theodore Mundt ; vol. 1, page 309. *Flogel's Geschichte der Hofnarren* ; page 399.

not being heard. It is the unoccupied wing of the castle of Whitehall. Nobody watches her here.

On then, on, adown that corridor, descending those stairs. There she stops before a door leading into the summer-house. She puts her ear to the door, and listens. Then she claps her hands three times.

The sound is re-echoed from the other side.

Oh, he is there, he is there! Forgotten now are her cares, forgotten her pains and tears. He is there. She has him again.

She throws open the door. It is dark indeed in the chamber, but *she* sees him, for the eye of love pierces the night; and if she sees him not, yet she feels his presence.

She rests on his heart; he presses her closely to his breast. Leaning on each other, they grope cautiously along through the dark, desolate chamber to the divan at the upper end, and there, both locked in a happy embrace, they sink upon the cushion.

At last I have you again! and my arms again clasp this divine form, and again my lips press this crimson mouth! Oh, my beloved, what an eternity has this separation been! Six days! Six long nights of agony! Have you not felt how my soul cried out for you, and was filled with trepidation; how I stretched my arms out into the night, and let them fall again disconsolate and trembling with anguish, because they clasped nothing,—naught but the cold, vacant night breeze! Did you not hear, my beloved, how I cried to you with sighs and tears; how in glowing dithyrambics I poured forth to you my longing, my love, my rapture? But you, cruel you, remained ever cold, ever smiling. Your eyes were ever flashing in all the pride and grandeur of a Juno. The roses on your cheeks were not one whit the paler. No, no, you have not longed for me: your heart has not felt this painful, blissful anguish. You are first and above all things the proud, cold Queen, and next, next the loving woman.

How unjust and hard you are, my Henry! whispered she softly. Ah, I have indeed suffered; and perhaps my pains have been more cruel and bitter than yours, for I, I had to let them consume me within. You could pour them forth, you could stretch out your arms after me, you could utter lamentations and sighs. You were not, like me, condemned to laugh, and to jest, and to listen with apparently attentive ear to all these often heard and constantly repeated phrases of praise and adoration from those about me. You were at least free to suffer. I was not. It is true, I smiled, but amidst the pains of death. It is true, my cheeks did not blanch, but rouge was the veil with which I covered their paleness; and then, Henry, in the midst of my pains and longings, I had, too, a sweet consolation. Your letters, your poems, which fell like the dew of heaven upon my sick soul, and restored it to health, for new torments and new hopes. Oh how I love them—those poems, in whose noble and enchanting language your love and our sufferings are re-echoed. How my whole soul flew forth to meet them, when I received them, and how pressed I my lips thousands and thousands of times on the paper

which seemed to me redolent with your breath and your sighs. How I love that good, faithful Jane, the silent messenger of our love. When I behold her entering my chamber, with the unsullied paper in hand, she is to me the dove with the olive leaf, that brings me peace and happiness, and I rush to her, and press her to my bosom; and I give her all the kisses I would give you, and feel how poor and powerless I am, because I cannot repay her all the happiness that she brings me. Ah, Henry, how many thanks do we owe to poor Jane!

Why do you call her poor, when she can be near you, always behold you, always hear you?

I call her poor, because she is unhappy. For she loves, Henry—she loves to desperation, to madness, and she is not loved. She is pining away with grief and pain, and wrings her hands in boundless woe. Have you not noticed how pale she is, and how her eyes become daily more dim?

No, I have not seen it, for I see naught but you, and Lady Jane is to me a lifeless image, as are all other women. But what! You tremble; and your whole frame writhes in my arms, as if in a convulsion? And what is that? Are you weeping?

Oh, I weep, because I am so happy. I weep, because I was thinking how fearful the suffering must be, to give the whole heart away, and receive nothing in return, naught but death! Poor Jane!

What is she to us? We, we love each other. Come, dear one, let me kiss the tears from your eyes; let me drink this nectar, that it may inspire me, and transfigure me to a god! Weep no more—no, weep not; or, if you will do so, be it only in the excess of rapture, and because word and heart are too poor to hold all this bliss!

Yes, yes, let us shout for joy; let us be lost in blessedness! exclaimed she passionately, as with frantic violence she threw herself on his bosom.

Both were now silent, mutely resting on each other's heart.

Oh how sweet this silence; how entrancing this noiseless, sacred night! How the trees without there murmur and rustle, as if they were singing a heavenly lullaby to the lovers; how inquisitively the pale crescent moon peeps through the window, as though she were seeking the twain whose blessed confidant she is.

But happiness is so swift-winged, and time flies so fast, when love is their companion.

Even now they must part again—now they must again say: Farewell.

Not yet, beloved, stay yet! See, the night is still dark; and hark, the castle clock is just striking two. No, go not yet.

I must, Henry, I must; the hours are past in which I can be happy.

Oh, you cold, proud soul! Does the head already long again for the crown; and can you wait no longer for the purple to again cover your shoulders? Come, let me kiss your shoulder; and think now, dear, that my crimson lips are also a purple robe.

And a purple robe for which I would gladly give my crown, and my

life! cried she with the utmost enthusiasm, as she folded him in her arms.

Do you love me then? Do you really love me?

Yes, I love you!

Can you swear to me that you love no one except me?

I can swear it, as true as there is a God above us, who hears my oath.

Bless you for it, you dear, you only one,—oh, how shall I call you— you, whose name I may not utter! Oh, do you know that it is cruel never to name the name of the loved one? Withdraw that prohibition; grudge me not the painfully sweet pleasure of being able at least to call you by your name.

No, said she with a shudder; for know you not that the sleep-walkers awake out of their dreams when they are called by name? I am a somnambulist, who with smiling courage moves along a dizzy height; call me by name, and I shall awake and, shuddering, plunge into the abyss beneath. Ah, Henry, I hate my name, for it is pronounced by other lips than yours. For you, I will not be named as other men call me. Baptize me, my Henry; give me another name—a name which is our secret, and which no one knows besides us.

I name you *Geraldine*, and as *Geraldine* I will praise and laud you before all the world; I will, in spite of all these spies and listeners, repeat again and again that I love you, and no one, not the King himself, shall be able to forbid me.

Hush, said she with a shudder, speak not of him. Oh, I conjure you, my Henry, be cautious; think, that you have sworn to me ever to think of the danger that threatens us, and will, without doubt, dash us in pieces if you, by only a sound, a look, or a smile, betray the sweet secret that unites us two. Are you still aware what you have sworn to me?

I am aware of it! But it is an unnatural Draconian law. What! even when I am alone with you, shall I never be allowed to address you otherwise, than with that reverence and restraint which is due the Queen? Even when no one can hear us, may I, by no syllable, by none, not the slightest intimation, remind you of our love?

No, no, do it not; for this castle has everywhere eyes and ears, and everywhere are spies and listeners behind the tapestry; behind the curtains; everywhere are they concealed and lurking, watching every feature, every smile, every word, whether it may not afford ground for suspicion. No, no, Henry; swear to me by our love that you will never, unless here in this room, address me otherwise than as your Queen. Swear to me, that beyond these walls, you will be to me only the respectful servant of your Queen, and at the same time the proud Earl and Lord, of whom it is said that never has a woman been able to touch his heart. Swear to me that you will not, by a look, by a smile, by even the gentlest pressure of the hand, betray what beyond this room is a crime for both of us. Let this room be the temple of our love; but when we once pass its threshold, we will not profane the

sweet mysteries of our happiness, by allowing unholy eyes to behold even a single ray of it. Shall it be so, my Henry?

Yes, it shall be so! said he with troubled voice; although I must confess that this dreadful illusion often tortures me almost to death. Oh, Geraldine, when I meet you elsewhere, when I observe the eye so icy and immoveable, with which you meet my look, I feel, as it were, my heart convulsed; and I say to myself: This is not she, whom I love—not the tender, passionate woman, whom in the darkness of the night I sometimes lock in my arms. This is Catharine, the Queen, but not my loved one. A woman cannot so disguise herself; art goes not so far as to falsify the entire nature, the innermost being and life of a person. Oh, there have been hours, awful, horrible hours, when it seemed to me as though all this were a delusion, a mystification—as though in some way an evil demon assumed the Queen's form by night to mock me, poor frenzied visionary, with a happiness that has no existence, but lives only in my imagination. When such thoughts come to me, I feel a frenzied fury, a crushing despair, and I could, regardless of my oath and even of the danger that threatens you, rush to you, and before all the courtly rabble and the King himself, ask: Are you really what you seem? Are you, Catharine Parr, King Henry's wife—nothing more, nothing else than that? Or are you, my beloved, the woman who is mine in her every thought, her every breath; who has vowed to me eternal love and unchanging truth; and whom I, in spite of the whole world, and the King, press to my heart as my own?

Unhappy man, if you ever venture that, you doom us both to death.

Be it so, then! In death you would at least be mine, and no one would longer dare separate us, and your eyes would no longer look so coldly and strangely upon me, as they often now do. Oh, I conjure you, gaze not upon me at all, if you cannot do it otherwise than with those cold, proud looks, that benumb my heart. Turn away your eyes and speak to me with averted face.

Then, men will say that I hate you, Henry.

It is more agreeable to me for them to say you abhor me than for them to see that I am wholly indifferent to you; that I am to you nothing more than the Earl of Surrey, your Lord Chamberlain.

No, no, Henry! They shall see that you are more to me than merely that. Before the whole assembled Court I will give you a token of my love. Will you then believe, you dear, foolish enthusiast, that I love you, and that it is no demon that rests here in your arms and swears that she loves nothing but you? Say, will you then believe me?

I will believe you? But no, there is no need of any sign, or any assurance. Nay, I know it; I feel indeed the sweet reality that cuddles to my side, warm, and filling me with happiness; and it is only the excess of happiness that makes me incredulous.

I will convince you thoroughly; and you shall doubt no more, not even in the intoxication of happiness. Listen, then. The King, as you know, is about to hold a great tournament and festival of the poets,

and it will take place in a few days. Now, then, at this feat I will publicly, in the presence of the King and his Court, give you a rosette that I wear on my shoulder, and in the silver fringe of which you will find a note from me. Will that satisfy you, my Henry?

And do you still question it, my dear? Do you question it, when you will make me proud and happy above all others of your Court?

He pressed her closely to his heart and kissed her. But suddenly she writhed in his arms, and started up in wild alarm.

Day is breaking, day is breaking! See there, a red streak is spreading over the clouds. The sun is coming; day is coming, and already begins to dawn.

He endeavored to detain her still; but she tore herself passionately away, and again enveloped her head in her veil.

Yes, said he, day is breaking and it is growing light! Let me then, for a moment at least, see your face. My soul thirsts for it as the parched earth for the dew. Come, it is light here at the window. Let me see your eyes.

She tore herself vehemently away. No, no, you must begone! Hark, it is already three o'clock. Soon everything will be astir in the castle. Did it not seem as if some person passed by the door here? Haste, haste, if you do not wish me to die of dread. She threw his cloak over him; she drew his hat over his brow, then once more she threw her arms around his neck and pressed on his lips a burning kiss.

Farewell, my beloved, farewell, Henry Howard. When we see each other again to-day, you are the Earl of Surrey, and I, the Queen, not your loved one—not the woman who loves you! Happiness is past and suffering awakes anew. Farewell.

She herself opened the glass-door, and pushed her lover out.

Farewell, Geraldine; good night, my dear! Day comes, and I again greet you as my Queen, and I shall have to endure again the torture of your cold looks and your haughty smiles.

CHAPTER XIX.

LOYOLA'S GENERAL.

SHE rushed to the window and gazed after him till he had disappeared, then she uttered a deep cry of anguish, and, wholly overcome by her agony, she sank down on her knees weeping and wailing, wringing her hands and raising them God.

But just before so happy and joyful, she was now full of woe and anguish; and bitter sighs of complaint came trembling from her lips.

Oh, oh, moaned she with sobs; what terrible agonies are these, and how full of despair—the anguish that lacerates my breast! I have lain in his arms; I have received his vows of love and accepted his kisses; and these vows are not mine, and these kisses he gave not to me. He kissed me, and he loves in me only *her*, whom I hate. He lays his hands in mine, and utters vows of love which he dedicates to her. He thinks and feels for her only—her alone. What a terrible torture this is? To be loved under her name; under her name to receive the vows of love that yet belong to me only—to me alone! For he loves me, me exclusively alone. They are my lips that he kisses, my form that he embraces; to me are addressed his words and his letters; and it is I that reply to them. He loves me, me only, and yet he puts no faith in me. I am nothing to him, naught but a lifeless image, like other women. This he has told me; and I did not become frenzied; and I had the cruel energy to pass off the tears wrung from me by despair, for tears of rapture. Oh, detestable, horrible mockery of fate—to be what I am not, and not to be what I am.

And with a shrill cry of agony she tore her hair, and with her fist smote upon her breast, and wept and moaned aloud.

She heard naught; she saw naught; she felt naught but her inexpressible and despairing anguish.

She did not once tremble for herself; she thought not at all of this—that she would be lost if she was found in this place.

And yet at the other side of the room a door had opened, softly and noiselessly, and a man had entered.

He shut the door behind him and walked up to Lady Jane, who still lay on the floor. He stood behind her while she uttered her despairing lamentation. He heard every word of her quivering lips; her whole heart painfully convulsed and torn with grief lay unveiled before him; and she knew it not.

Now he bent over her; and with his hand he lightly touched her shoulder. At this touch she gave a convulsive start, as if hit by the stroke of a sword, and her sobbing was immediately silenced.

An awful pause ensued. The woman lay on the floor motionless, breathless, and near her, tall and cold as a figure of bronze, stood the man.

Lady Jane Douglas, said he then, sternly and solemnly, stand up. It becomes not your father's daughter to be upon her knees, when it is not God to whom she kneels. But you are not kneeling to God, but to an idol, which you yourself have made, and to which you have erected a temple in your heart. This idol is called: "*your own personal misfortune*." But it is written: "Thou shalt have no other Gods but me." Therefore I say to you once more: Lady Jane Douglas, rise from your knees, for it is not your God to whom you kneel.

And, as though these words exercised a magnetical power over her, she raised herself slowly up from the floor, and now stood there before her father, stern and cold as a statue of marble.

Cast from you the sorrows of this world, which burden you, and hinder you in the sacred work that God has imposed on you ! continued Earl Douglas in his metallic, solemn voice. It is written, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," saith our God. But you, Jane, you are to throw down your trouble at the foot of the throne ; and your burden will become a crown that will glorify your head.

He laid his hand on her head, but she wildly shook it off.

No, cried she with heavy, faltering tongue, as if confused in a dream. Away with this crown ! I wish no crown upon which devils have laid a spell. I wish no royal robe that has been dyed crimson with the blood of my beloved.

She is still in the delirium of her anguish, muttered the Earl, as he contemplated the pale, trembling woman, who had now sunk again to her knees, and was staring straight before her with eyes bewildered and stretched wide open. But the looks of the Earl remained cold and unmoved, and not the least compassion was aroused in him for his poor daughter, now penetrated with anguish.

Arise, said he in a hard, steely voice. The Church, by my mouth, commands you to serve her as you have vowed to do ; that is to say, with glad heart and a sense of your reliance on God ; that is to say, with smiling lips and a serene, beaming eye, as becomes a disciple inspired by faith, and as you have sworn to do in the hands of our lord and master Ignatius Loyola.

I cannot ! I cannot ! moaned she in a low tone. I cannot be glad at heart when despair, like a wild boar, is rending my heart ; I cannot command my eye to shine when my eyes are dimmed with tears of anguish. Oh, have pity, have compassion ! Remember that you are my father ; that I am your daughter ; the daughter of a wife whom you loved, and who would find in the grave no rest if she knew how you are racking and torturing me. My mother, my mother, if thy spirit is near me, come and protect me. Let thy mild looks over-shadow my head, and breathe a breath of thy love into the heart of this cruel father, who is ready to sacrifice his child on the altar of his God.

God has called me, said the Earl, and like Abraham, I too will learn to obey. But I will not adorn my victim with flowers, but with a royal crown. I will not plunge a knife into her breast, but will put a golden sceptre into her hand and say : thou art a queen before men, but before God be thou a faithful and obedient servant. Thou hast all to command. But the Holy Church, to whose service thou hast consecrated thyself, and who will bless thee if thou art faithful ; who will dash thee in pieces with her curse, if thou darest deal treacherously ; she commands thee. No, you are not my daughter, but the priestess of the Church, consecrated to her holy service. No, I have no sympathy with your tears and this anguish, for I see the end of these sorrows, and I know that these tears will be as a diadem of pearls about your temples. Lady Jane Douglas, it is the saintly Loyola who sends you his commands by my

mouth. Obey then, not because I am your father, but because I am the General to whom you have sworn obedience and fidelity unto your life's end.

Then kill me, my father ! said she feebly. Let this life end, which is to me but a torture, a protracted martyrdom. Punish me for my disobedience by plunging your dagger deep into my breast. Punish me, and grudge me not the repose of the grave.

Poor enthusiast, said the father ; suppose you, we would be foolish enough to subject you to so light a punishment ? No, no, if you dare, in insolent disobedience, rebel against my commands, your penance shall be a terrible one, and your punishment without end. I will not kill *you*, but *him* whom you love ; it will be his head that falls ; and you will be his murderess. He shall die on the scaffold and you—you shall live in disgrace.

Oh horrible ! groaned Jane, as she buried her face in her hands.

Her father continued : Silly, short-sighted child, who thought she could play with the sword, and did not see that she herself might feel the stroke of this double-edged blade. You wanted to be the servant of the Church, that you might thereby become mistress of the world. You would acquire glory, but this glory must not singe your head with its fiery rays. Silly child ; he who plays with fire will be consumed. But we penetrated your thoughts and the wish of which you yourself were unconscious. We looked into the depths of your being, and when we found love there, we made use of love for our own purposes and your salvation. What do you bewail then, and why do you weep ? Have we not allowed you to love ? Have we not authorized you to give yourself entirely up to this love ? Do you not call yourself Earl Surrey's wife, though you cannot name to me a priest that married you ? Lady Jane, obey, and we envy you not the happiness of your love ; dare to rebel against us, and disgrace and shame overtake you, and you shall stand before all the world disowned and scoffed at ; you the strumpet, that——

Stop, my father ! cried Jane, as she sprang vehemently from the floor. Desist from your terrible words if you do not wish me to die of shame. Nay, I submit, I obey ! You are right, I cannot draw back.

And why would you either ? Is it not a life pleasant and full of enjoyment ? Is it not rare good fortune to see our sins transfigured to virtue ; to be able to account earthly enjoyment the service of heaven ? And what do you bewail then ? That he does not love you ? Nay, he does love you ; his vows of love still echo in your ears ; your heart still trembles with the fruition of happiness. What matters it if the Earl of Surrey with his inward eye sees the woman he folds in his arms to be another than you ? Yet in reality he loves but you alone. Whether you are for him *named* Catharine Parr or Jane Douglas, is all the same if you only *are* his love.

But a day will come when he will discover his mistake, and when he will curse me.

That day will never come. The Holy Church will find a way to avert that, if you bow to her will and are obedient to her.

I do bow to it! sighed Jane. I will obey; only promise me, my father, that no harm shall happen to *him*; that I shall not be his murderess.

No, you shall become his saviour and deliverer. Only you must fulfill punctually the work I commit to you. First of all, then, tell me the result of your meeting to-day. He does not doubt that you are the Queen?

No, he believes it so firmly that he would take the sacrament on it. That is to say, he believes it now because I have promised him to give him publicly a sign by which he may recognize that it is the Queen that loves him.

And this sign? enquired her father, with a look beaming with joy.

I have promised him that at the great tournament, the Queen will give him a rosette, and that in that rosette he will find a note from the Queen.

Ah, the idea is an admirable one! exclaimed Lord Douglas, and only a woman who wishes to avenge herself could conceive it. So then, the Queen will become her own accuser, and herself give into our hands a proof of her guilt. The only difficulty in the way is to bring the Queen, without arousing her suspicion, to wear this rosette, and to give it to Surrey.

She will do it if I beg her to do so, for she loves me; and I shall so represent it to her that she will do it as an act of kindness to me. Catharine is good-natured and agreeable, and cannot refuse a request.

And I will apprise the King of it. That is to say, I shall take good care not to do this myself, for it is always dangerous to approach a hungry tiger in his cage and carry him his food, because he might in his voracity very readily devour our own hand together with the proffered meat.

But how? asked she with an expression of alarm. Will he content himself with punishing Catharine alone; will he not also crush him—him whom he must look upon as her lover?

He will do so. But you yourself shall save him and set him free. You shall open his prison and give him freedom, and he will love you—you, the saviour of his life.

Father, father, it is a hazardous game that you are playing; and it may happen that you will become thereby your daughter's murderer. For, listen well to what I tell you; if *his* head falls, I die by my own hands; if you make me his murderess, you become thereby mine; and I will curse you and execrate you in hell! What to me is a royal crown if it be stained with Henry Howard's blood? What care I for renown and honor, if he is not there to see my greatness, and if his beaming eyes do not reflect back to me the light of my crown? Protect him therefore; guard his life as the apple of your eye, if you wish me to accept the royal crown that you offer me, so that the King of England may become again a vassal of the Church!

And that the whole of devout Christendom may praise Jane Douglas,

the pious queen, who has succeeded in the holy work of bringing the rebellious and recreant son of the Church, Henry the Eighth, back to the Holy Father in Rome, to the only consecrated Lord of the Church, truly penitent. On, on, my daughter; do not despond. A high aim beckons you; and a brilliant fortune awaits you! Our holy mother, the Church, will bless and praise you, and Henry the Eighth will declare you his Queen.

CHAPTER XX.

THE PRISONER.

STILL all was calm and quiet in the palace of Whitehall. Nothing was stirring, and nobody had heard how Lady Jane Douglas left her chamber and glided down the corridor.

No one had heard it, and no eye is awake, and none sees what is now taking place in the Queen's room.

She is alone; all alone. The servants are all asleep in their chambers. The Queen herself has bolted the doors of the ante-room on the inside, and no other door leads into her boudoir and bed-room, except through this ante-room.

She is therefore perfectly secluded, perfectly secure.

Speedily and in haste she envelopes herself in a long black mantle, the hood of which she draws well over her head and brow, and which completely covers and conceals her form.

And now she presses on a spring inserted in the frame of a picture. The picture flies back and shows an opening, through which a person can quite conveniently pass out.

Catharine does so. Then she carefully pushes the picture back to its place from the outside, and for a long time walks on in the passage hollowed out of the solid wall, till groping along she at last lays hold again of a knob in the wall. She presses on it; and now at her feet opens a trap-door, through which a feeble light forces its way and renders visible a small narrow staircase there situated. Catharine enters and descends the steps with winged feet. Now at the foot of the staircase, she again presses on a secret spring; and again a door opens, through which the Queen passes into a large hall.

Oh, whispered she, fetching a long breath, the green summer house at last.

She quickly traversed it and opened the next door.

John Heywood?

I am here, Queen!

Hush, hush, gently as possible, that the watch, who walks up and down just behind the door, may not hear us. Come, we still have a long walk, let us make haste.

Again she pressed on a spring inserted in the wall; and again a door opens. But before Catharine bolts this door, she takes the lamp burning on the table there, which is to lighten the dark and difficult path through which they are now to wend their way.

Now she bolts the door behind them; and they enter a long, dark corridor, at the end of which is found still another staircase, and down which they both go. Numberless steps conduct them below; gradually the air becomes dense; the steps moist. The stillness of the grave is around them. No sound of life, not the least noise is now perceptible.

They are in a subterranean passage, which stretches out in length before them further than the eye can reach.

Catharine turns to John Heywood; the lamp lights up her face, which is pale, but exhibits an expression firm and resolute.

John Heywood, reflect once more! I ask not whether you have courage, for I know that. I only wish to know, whether you will employ this courage for your Queen?

No, not for the Queen, but for the noble woman who has saved my son.

You must then be my protector to-day if we meet with dangers. But if it be God's will, we shall encounter no dangers. Let us go.

They go vigorously forward, silent all the way.

At length they come to a place where the passage grows broader, and spreads out into a little open chamber; on the side walls of which a few seats are placed.

We have now accomplished half of the journey, said Catharine; and here we will rest a little.

She placed the lamp on the small marble table in the middle of the passage and sat down, pointing to John Heywood to take a seat near her.

I am not the Queen here, said she; and you are not the King's fool; but I am a poor weak woman, and you are my protector. You may, therefore, well have the right to sit by me.

But John shook his head with a smile, and sat down at her feet. St. Catharine, saviour of my son, I lie at thy feet, and devoutly return thanks to thee.

John, are you acquainted with this subterranean passage? asked the Queen.

John gave a sad smile. I am acquainted with it, Queen.

Ah, you know it? I supposed it was a secret of the King and Queen. Then you will readily conceive that the fool knows it. For the King of England and the fool are twin brothers. Yes, Queen, I know this passage; and I once wended it in anguish and tears.

What! You yourself, John Heywood?

Yes, Queen. And now I ask you, do you know the history of this underground passage? You are silent? Now, well for you that you do not know it. It is a long and bloody history, and if I should narrate to you the whole of it, the night would be too short for it. When this passage was built, Henry was still young, and possessed yet a heart. At that time, he loved not merely his wives, but his friends and servants also—specially Cromwell, the all-powerful Minister. He then resided at Whitehall; and Henry in the royal apartments of the Tower. But Henry was always longing for his favorite; and so Cromwell one day surprised him with this subterranean passage, the construction of which had occupied a hundred men a whole year. Ah, ah, the King was then very much moved, and thanked his powerful Minister, for this surprise, with tears and hugs. There passed scarcely a day that Henry did not go to Cromwell through this passage. So he saw each day how the palace of Whitehall became more and more splendid and glorious; and when he returned to the Tower, he discovered that this residence was altogether unworthy of a king; but that his Minister lived by far more magnificently than the King of England. That, Queen, was the cause of Cromwell's fall!—The King wanted Whitehall. The sly Cromwell noticed it, and made him a present of his gem, the palace, on whose construction and decoration he had labored ten years. Henry accepted the present; but now Cromwell's fall was irrevocable. The King could not, of course, forgive Cromwell for having dared to offer him a present so valuable, that Henry could not, or would not repay it. He remained therefore, Cromwell's debtor; and since this tormented and vexed him, he swore Cromwell's ruin. When Henry moved into Whitehall, it was concluded that Cromwell must ascend the scaffold. Ah, the King is such an economical builder. A palace costs him nothing but the head of a subject. With Cromwell's head he paid for Whitehall; and Wolsey died for Hampton Court.

Not on the scaffold though, John.

Oh, no; Henry preferred merely to break his heart, and not his head. First, he had that wonderful pleasure villa, Hampton Court, with all its treasures presented him by Wolsey; then, he removed him from all his offices, and deprived him of all his honors. Finally, he was to go to the Tower as a prisoner; but he died on his way thither. No, you are right! Wolsey did not die on the scaffold, he was put to death much more slowly and more cruelly. He was not killed with the sword, but pricked to death with pins!

Did you not say, John, that you had travelled this way once before?

Yes, Queen, and I did it to bid farewell to the noblest of men, and the truest of friends, *Thomas More!* I begged and besought Cromwell so long that he had compassion on my anguish, and allowed me to go through this passage to Thomas More, that I might at least receive the blessing and last kiss of affection of this saint. Ah, Queen, speak no more of it to me. From that day I became a fool; for I saw it was not

worth the trouble to be an earnest man. when such men as More are executed as criminals.—Come Queen, let us go on!

Yes, on, John! said she rising. But do you know then whither we are going?

Ah, Queen, do I not then know you? and did I not tell you that Anne Askew is to be stretched upon the rack to-morrow, unless she recant!

I see that you have understood me, said she, giving him a friendly nod. Yes, I am going to Anne Askew!

But how will you, without being seen and discovered, find out her cell?

John, even the unhappy have friends. Yes, the Queen herself has a few! and so chance, or it may be even God's will, has so arranged matters, that Anne Askew is occupying, just at this time, that small room in which this secret passage terminates.

Is she alone in that room?

Yes, all alone. The guard stands without, before the door.

And should they hear you, and open the door?

Then without doubt I am lost, without God supports me.

They walked on in silence, both too much occupied with their own thoughts to interrupt them by conversation.

But this long, extended walk at length wearied Catharine. She leant exhausted against the wall.

Will you do me a favor, Queen? asked John Heywood. Permit me to carry you. Your little feet can bear you no farther; make me your feet, your Majesty!

She refused with a friendly smile. No, John, these are the passions of a saint; and you know one must make the round of them in the sweat of his face and on his knees.

Oh, Queen, how noble and how courageous you are! exclaimed John Heywood. You do good without display, and you shun no danger, if it avails towards the accomplishment of a noble work.

Yet, John, said she with a bewitching smile, I dread danger; and just on that account I begged you to accompany me. I shudder at the long, desolate way, at the darkness and grave-like stillness of this passage. Ah, John, I thought to myself, if I came here alone, the shades of Anne Boleyn and Catharine would be roused from their sleep by me who wear their crown; they would hover about me, and seize me by the hand and lead me to their graves, to show me that there is yet room there for me likewise. You see, then, that I am not at all courageous, but a cowardly and trembling woman,

And nevertheless, you came, Queen?

I reckoned on you, John Heywood. It was my duty to risk this passage to save, perchance, the life of the poor enthusiastic girl. For it shall not be said that Catharine deserts her friends in misfortune, and that she shrinks back at danger. I am but a poor weak woman, John, who cannot defend her friends with weapons, and, therefore, I must resort to other means. But see, John, here the path forks! Ah, my

God, I know it only from the description that was given me, but no one said anything of this to me. John, which way must we now turn?

This way, Queen; and here we are at the end of our journey. That path there leads to the torture-chamber, that is to say to a small grated-window, through which one can overlook that room. When King Henry was in special good humor, he would resort with his friend to this grating to divert himself a little with the tortures of the damned and blasphemers. For you well know, Queen, only such as have blasphemed God, or have not recognized King Henry as the Pope of their Church, have the honor of the rack as their due. But hush; here we are at the door, and here is the spring that opens it.

Catharine set her lamp on the ground and pressed the spring.

The door turned slowly and noiselessly on its hinges, and softly, like the shades, the two entered.

They now found themselves in a small, circular apartment, which seemed to have been originally a niche formed in the wall of the Tower, rather than a room. Through a narrow grated opening in the wall only a little air and light penetrated into this dungeon; the bald, bare walls of which showed the stones of the masonry. There was no chair, no table in the whole space; only yonder in that corner on the earth they had heaped up some straw. On this straw lay a pale, tender creature; the sunken, thin cheeks, transparently white as alabaster; the brow so pure and clear; the entire countenance so peaceful; the bare, meagre arms thrown back over the head; the hands folded over the forehead; the head bent to one side in quiet, peaceful slumber; the delicate tender form wrapped in a long black dress, gently stretched out, and on her lips a smile, such as only the happy know.

That was Anne Askew, the criminal, the condemned. Anne Askew, who was an atheist only for this, because she did not believe in the King's vast elevation and godlikeness, and would not subject her own free soul to that of the King.

She sleeps! whispered Catharine deeply moved. Wholly involuntarily she folded her hands as she stepped to the couch of the sufferer, and a low prayer trembled on her lips.

So sleep the just! said Heywood. Angels comfort them in their slumbers; and the breath of God refreshes them. Poor girl; how soon, and they will wrench these noble, fair limbs, and torture thee for the honor of God, and open to tones of distress that mouth which now smiles so peacefully!

No, no, said the Queen hastily. I have come to save her, and God will assist me to do it. I cannot spare her slumbers any longer. I must wake her.

She bent down and pressed a kiss on the young girl's forehead. Anne, awake; I am here! I will save you and set you free. Anne, Anne, awake!

She slowly raised her large brilliant eyes, and nodded a salutation to Catharine.

Catharine Parr ! said she with a smile. I expected only a letter from you ; and have you come yourself ?

The guards have been dismissed, and the turnkeys changed, Anne ; for our correspondence had been discovered.

Ah, you will write to me no more in future ! And yet your letters were my only comfort, sighed Anne Askew. But that also is well ; and perhaps it will only make the path that I have to tread still easier ! The heart must set itself free from all earthly bonds, that the soul may move its pinions freely and easily, and return to God.

Hear me, Anne, hear, said Catharine in a low and hurried voice. A terrible danger threatens you ! The King has given orders to move you, by means of the rack, to recant.

Well, and what more ? asked Anne with smiling face.

Unfortunate, you know not what you are saying ! You know not what fearful agonies await you ! You know not the power of pains, which are perhaps still mightier than the spirit, and may overcome it.

And if I did know them now, what would it avail me ? asked Anne Askew. You say they will put me to the rack. Well, then, I shall have to bear it, for I have no power to change their will.

Yet, Anne, yet you have the power ! Retract what you have said, Anne ! Declare that you repent, and that you perceive that you have been deluded ! Say that you will recognize the King as Lord of the Church ; that you will swear to the Six Articles, and never believe in the Pope of Rome. Ah, Anne, God sees your heart and knows your thoughts. You have no need to make them known by your lips. He has given you life, and you have no right to throw it away ; you must seek to keep it so long as you can. Recant then ! It is perfectly allowable to deceive those who would murder us. Recant then, Anne, recant ! When they in their haughty arrogance demand of you to say what they say, consider them as lunatics, to whom you make apparent concessions only to keep them from raving. Of what consequence is it, whether you do or do not say that the King is the head of the Church ? From His heavens above, God looks down and smiles at this petty earthly strife which concerns not Him, but men only. Let scholars and theologians wrangle ; we women have nothing to do with it. If we only believe in God, and bear him in our hearts, the form in which we do it is a matter of indifference. But in this case the question is not about God, but merely about external dogmas. Why should you trouble yourself with these ? What have you to do with the controversies of the priests ? Recant then, poor enthusiastic child, recant !

While Catharine in a low tone and with fluttering breath thus spoke, Anne Askew had slowly arisen from her couch, and now stood, like a lily, so slender and delicate, confronting the Queen.

Her noble countenance expressed deep indignation. Her eyes shot lightning ; and a contemptuous smile was on her lips.

What ? Can you thus advise me ? said she. Can you wish me to deny my faith, and abjure my God, only to escape earthly pain ? And

your tongue does not refuse to utter this, and your heart does not shrink with shame while you do it? Look at these arms; what are they worth that I should not sacrifice them to God? See these feeble limbs! Are they so precious that I, like a disgusting niggard, should spare them? No, no, God is my highest good—not this feeble, decaying body! For God I sacrifice it. I should recant? Never! Faith is not enveloped in this or that garb; it must be naked and open. So may mine be. And if I then am chosen to be an example of the pure faith, that denies not, and makes profession—well then, envy me not this preeminence. “Many are called, but few are chosen.” If I am one of the chosen, I thank God for it, and bless the erring mortals who wish to make me such by means of the torture of the rack. Ah, believe me, Catharine, I rejoice to die, for it is such a sad, desolate, and desperate thing to live. Let me die, Catharine—die to enter into blessedness!

But, poor pitiable child! This is more than death; it is the torture of earth that threatens you. Oh, bethink you, Anne, that you are only a feeble woman. Who knows whether the rack may not yet conquer your spirit, and whether you, with your mangled limbs, may not by the fury of the pain yet be brought to that point that you will recant and abjure your faith!

If I could do that, cried Anne Askew with flashing eyes, believe me, Queen, as soon as I came to my senses I would lay violent hands on myself, in order to give myself over to eternal damnation, as the punishment of my recantation! God has ordered that I shall be a sign of the true faith. Be his command fulfilled!

Well then, so be it, said Catharine resolutely. Do not recant, but save yourself from your executioners! I, Anne, I will save you! I cannot bear—I cannot think of it—that this dear noble form should be sacrificed to a vile delusion of man; that they will torture to the honor of God a noble likeness of the same God! Oh, come, come, I will save you! I, the Queen! Give me your hand. Follow me out of this dungeon. I know a path that leads out of this place; and I will conceal you so long in my own apartments that you can continue your flight without danger.

No, no, Queen, you shall not conceal her with you! said John Heywood. You have been graciously pleased to allow me to be your confidant; envy me not then a share in your noble work also. Not with you shall Anne Askew find refuge, but with me. Oh, come, Anne, follow your friends. It is life that calls you, that opens the doors to you, and desires to call you by a thousand names to itself! Do you not hear them, all those sweet and alluring voices; do you not see them, all those noble and smiling faces, how they greet you and beckon to you? Anne Askew, it is the noble husband that calls you! You know him not as yet, but he is waiting for you there in the world without. Anne Askew, there are your children, who are stretching their tender arms out to you. You have not yet borne them; but love holds them in her arms and will bring them to meet you. It is the wife and the mother that the

world yet demands of you, Anne. You ought not to shun the holy calling which God has given you. Come then and follow us—follow your Queen, who has the right to order her subject. Follow the friend, who has sworn that he will watch over you and protect you as a father!

Father in heaven protect me! exclaimed Anne Askew, falling on her knees and stretching her hands upward. Father in heaven, they would tear away thy child, and alienate my heart from Thee! They are leading me into temptation and alluring me with their words. Protect me, my Father; make my ear deaf, that I may not hear them! Give me a sign that I am Thine; that no one has any longer power over me, save Thou alone! A sign, that Thou, Father, callest me!

And as if God had really heard her prayer, a loud knocking was now perceived at the outer door, and a voice cried: Anne Askew, awake, and hold yourself ready! The High-Chancellor and the Bishop of Winchester come to fetch you away!

Ah, the rack! groaned Catharine, as with a shudder she buried her face in her hands.

Yes, the rack! said Anne with a blissful smile. God calls me!

John Heywood had approached the Queen and impetuously seized her hand. You see it is in vain, said he urgently. Make haste then to save yourself! Hasten to leave this prison before the door there opens.

No, said Catharine firmly and resolutely. No, I stay. She shall not surpass me in courage and greatness of soul! She will not deny her God; well then, I also will be a witness of my God. I will not in shame cast my eyes to the ground before this young girl; like her I will frankly and openly profess my faith; like her I will say: God alone is Lord of his Church, God—

There was a movement without; a key was heard to turn in the lock.

Queen, I conjure you, besought John Heywood, by all that is holy to you, by your love, come, come!

No, no! cried she vehemently.

But now Anne seized her hand, and stretching the other arm towards heaven, she said in a loud commanding voice: In the name of God I order you to leave me!

While Catharine drew back wholly involuntarily, John Heywood pushed her to the secret door, and urging her out almost with violence, he drew the door to behind them both.

Just as the secret door had closed, the other on the opposite side opened.

With whom were you speaking? asked Gardiner, peering around the room with a sharp look.

With the tempter, that wished to alienate me from God, said she. With the tempter, who at the approach of your footsteps wanted to fool my heart with fear, and persuade me to recant!

You are then firmly resolved? you do not retract? asked Gardiner; and a savage joy shone in his pale, hard countenance.

No, I do not recant! said she with a face beaming with smiles.

Then in the name of God and of the King, I take you into the torture chamber! cried Chancellor Wriothesley, as he advanced and laid his heavy hand on Anne's shoulder. You would not hear the voice of love warning you and calling you, so we will now try to arouse you from your madness by the voice of wrath and damnation.

He beckoned to the attendants on the rack, who stood behind him in the open door, and ordered them to seize her and carry her to the torture chamber.

Anne, smiling, turned them back. Nay, not so! said she. The Saviour went on foot, and bore his cross to the place of execution. I will tread His path. Show me the way, I follow you. But let no one dare touch me. I will show you that not by constraint, but gladly and freely I tread the path of suffering, which I shall endure for the sake of my God. Rejoice, O my soul—sing, my lips, for the Bridegroom is near, and the feast is about to begin.

And in exultant tones, Anne Askew began to sing a hymn, that had not died away when she entered the torture chamber.

CHAPTER XXI.

PRINCESS ELIZABETH.

THE King sleeps. Let him sleep! He is old and infirm, and God has severely punished the restless tyrant with a vacillating, ever disquieted, never satisfied spirit; while he bound his body and made the spirit prisoner of the body; while he made the ambitious King, struggling for the infinite, a slave to his own flesh. How high soever his thoughts soar, still the King remains a clumsy, confined, powerless child of humanity; how much soever his conscience harrasses him with disquiet and dread, yet he must be calm and endure it. He cannot run away from his conscience; God has fettered him by the flesh.

The King is sleeping! But the Queen is not; and Jane Douglas is not; neither is Princess Elizabeth.

She has watched with heart beating high. She was restless, and pacing her room up and down in strange confusion, waited for the hour that she had appointed for the meeting. Now the hour had arrived. A glowing crimson overspread the face of the young Princess; and her hand trembled as she took the light and opened the secret door to the corridor. She stood still for a moment, hesitating; then, ashamed of her irresolution, she crossed the corridor and ascended the small staircase which led to the tower chamber. With a hasty movement she

pushed opened the door and entered the room. She was at the end of her journey, and Thomas Seymour was already there.

As she saw him an involuntary trepidation came over her, and for the first time she now became conscious of her hazardous step.

As Seymour, the ardent young man, approached her with a passionate salutation, she stepped shyly back and pushed away his hand.

How! you will not allow me to kiss your hand? asked he, and she thought she observed on his face a slight scornful smile. You make me the happiest of mortals by inviting me to this interview, and now you stand before me rigid and cold, and I am not once permitted to clasp you in my arms. Elizabeth?

Elizabeth! He had called her by her first name without her having given him permission to do so. That offended her. In the midst of her confusion, that aroused the pride of the Princess, and made her aware how much she must have forgotten her own dignity, when another could be so forgetful of it.

She wished to regain it. At this moment she would have given a year of her life if she had not taken this step; if she had not invited the Earl to this meeting.

She wanted to try and regain in his eyes her lost position, and again to become to him the Princess.

Pride in her was still mightier than love. She meant her lover should at the same time bow before her as her favored servant.

Therefore she gravely said: Earl Thomas Seymour, you have often begged us for a private conversation; we now grant it to you! Speak, then! what matter of importance have you to bring before us?

And with an air of gravity she stepped to an easy chair, on which she seated herself slowly and solemnly like a queen, who gives audience to her vassals.

Poor, innocent child, that in her unconscious trepidation wished to intrench herself behind her grandeur, as behind a shield, which might conceal her maidenly fear and girlish anxiety!

But Thomas Seymour, however, divined her thoughts; and his proud and cold heart revolted against this child's attempt to defy him.

He wanted to humble her; he wanted to compel her to bow before him, and implore his love as a gracious gift.

He, therefore, bowed low to the Princess, and respectfully said: Your Highness, it is true I have often besought you for an audience; but you have so long refused me, that at last I could no longer summon up courage to solicit it; and I let my wish be silent and my heart dumb. Therefore seek not now, when these pains have been subdued, to excite them again. My heart should remain dead, my lips mute. You have have so willed; and I have submitted to your will. Farewell, then, Princess, and may your days be happier and more serene than those of poor Thomas Seymour!

He bowed low before her, and then went slowly to the door. He had already opened it and was about to step out, when a hand was sud-

denly laid on his shoulder and drew him with vehement impetuosity back into the room.

Do you want to go? asked Elizabeth with fluttering breath and trembling voice. You want to leave me, and, flouting me, you want now, it may be, to go to the Duchess of Richmond, your mistress, and relate to her with a sneer, that the Princess Elizabeth granted you an interview, and that you have flouted her?

The Duchess of Richmond is not my mistress, said the Earl earnestly.

No, not your mistress; but she will very soon be your wife!

She will never be my wife!

And why not?

Because I do not love her, Princess!

A beam of delight passed over Elizabeth's pale, agitated face. Why do you call me Princess? asked she.

Because you have come as a Princess to favor your poor servant with an audience. But, ah, it would be greatly abusing your princely grace did I want to protract this audience still further. I therefore retire, Princess!

And he again approached the door. But Elizabeth rushed after him, and laying hold of his arms with both hands, she wildly pushed him back.

Her eyes shot lightning; her lips trembled; a passionate warmth was manifested in her whole being. Now she was the true daughter of her father, inconsiderate and passionate in her wrath, destroying in her ferocity.

You shall not go, muttered she with her teeth firmly set. I will not let you go! I will not let you confront me any longer with that cold, smiling face. Scold me; cast on me the bitterest reproaches, because I have dared brave you so long; curse me, if you can. Anything but this smiling calmness. It kills me; it pierces my heart like a dagger. For you see well enough that I have no longer the power to withstand you; you see well enough that I love you. Yes, I love you to ecstacy and to desperation; with desire and dread. I love you as my demon and my angel. I am angry, because you have so entirely crushed the pride of my heart. I curse you, because you have made me so entirely your slave; and the next moment I fall on my knees and beseech God to forgive me this crime against you. I love you, I say—not as these soft, gentle hearted women love, with a smile on the lip; but with madness and desperation, with jealousy and wrath. I love you as my father loved Anne Boleyn, whom, in the hatred of his love and the cruel wrath of his jealousy, he made to mount the scaffold, because he had been told that she was untrue to him. Ah, had I the power, I would do as my father did; I would murder you, if you should dare ever to cease to love me. And now, Thomas Seymour, now say whether you have the courage to desire to leave me?

She looked bewitching in the flaming might of her passion; she was

so young, so ardent; and Thomas Seymour was so ambitious! In his eyes, Elizabeth was not merely the beautiful charming maiden, who loved him; she was more than that: she was the daughter of Henry the Eighth, the Princess of England, perchance some day the heiress of the throne. It is true, her father had disinherited her, and by act of Parliament declared her unworthy of succeeding to the throne.* But Henry's vacillating mind might change, and the disowned Princess might one day become Queen.

The Earl thought of this as he gazed on Elizabeth; as he saw her before him, so charming, so young, and so glowing with passion. He thought of it as he now clasped her in his arms, and pressed on her lips a burning kiss.

No, I will not go, whispered he. I will never more depart from your side, if you do not wish me to go. I am yours!—your slave, your vassal; and I will never be anything else but this alone. They may betray me; your father may punish me for high treason; yet will I exult in my good fortune, for Elizabeth loves me, and it will be for Elizabeth that I die!

You shall not die! cried she clinging fast to him. You shall live, live at my side, proud, great and happy! You shall be my lord and my master; and if I am ever Queen, and I feel here in my heart that I must become so, then will Thomas Seymour be King of England.

That is to say, in the quiet and secrecy of your chamber I should perhaps be so! said he with a sigh. But there without, before the world, I shall still be ever only a servant; and, at the best, I shall be called the favorite.

Never, never, that I swear to you! Said I not that I loved you?

But the love of woman is so changeable! Who knows how long it will be before you will tread under your feet poor Thomas Seymour, when once the crown has adorned your brow.

She looked at him well nigh horrified. Can this be, then? Is it possible, that one can forget and forsake what he once loved?

Do you ask! Elizabeth? Has not your father already his sixth wife?

It is true, said she, as mournfully she dropped her head upon her breast. But I, said she after a pause, I shall not be like my father in that. I shall love you eternally! And that you may have a guaranty of my faithfulness, I offer myself to you as your wife.

Astonished, he looked inquiringly into her excited, glowing face! He did not understand her.

But she continued passionately: Yes, you shall be my lord and my husband! Come, my beloved, come! I have not called you to take upon yourself the disgraceful *role* of the secret lover of a Princess—I have called you to be my husband. I wish a bond to unite us two, that is so indissoluble that not even the wrath and will of my father, but only death itself, can sever it. I will give you proof of my love and my devotion; and you shall be forced to acknowledge that I truly love

you. Come, my beloved, that I may soon hail you as my husband!

He looked at her as though petrified. Whither will you lead me?

To the private chapel! said she innocently. I have written Cranmer to await me there at daybreak. Let us hasten, then!

Cranmer! You have written to the Archbishop? cried Seymour amazed. How? what say you? Cranmer awaits us in the private chapel?

Without doubt he is waiting for us, as I have written him to do so.

And what is he to do? What do you want of him?

She looked at him in astonishment. What do I want of him? Why, that he may marry us!

The Earl staggered back as if stunned. And have you written him that also?

*Nay, indeed, said she with a charming, childlike smile. I know very well that it is dangerous to trust such secrets to paper. I have only written him to come in his official robes, because I have an important secret to confess to him.

Oh, God be praised! We are not lost, sighed Seymour.

But how, I do not understand you? asked she. You do not extend me your hand? You do not hasten to conduct me to the chapel?

Tell me, I conjure you, tell me only this one thing: Have you ever spoken to the Archbishop of your—no—of our love! Have you ever betrayed to him so much as a syllable of that which stirs our hearts?

She blushed deeply beneath the steady gaze which he fixed on her. Upbraid me, Seymour, whispered she. But my heart was weak and timorous; and as often as I tried to fulfil the holy duty, and confess everything honestly and frankly to the Archbishop, I could not do it! The word died on my lips; and it was as though an invisible power paralyzed my tongue.

So then, Cranmer knows nothing?

No, Seymour, he knows nothing yet! But now he shall learn all; now we will go before him and tell him that we love each other, and constrain him, by our prayers, to bless our union and join our hands.

Impossible! cried Seymour. That can never be!

How? What do you say? asked she in astonishment.

I say that Cranmer will never be so insane, nay, so criminal, as to fulfill your wish. I say that you can never be my wife.

She looked him full and square in the face. Have you not then told me that you love me? asked she. Have I not sworn to you that I love you in return? Must we then not be married, in order to sanctify the union of our hearts?

Seymour sunk his eyes to the ground before her pure innocent look, and blushed for shame. She did not understand this blush; because he was silent, she deemed him convinced.

Come, said she, come; Cranmer is waiting for us!

He again raised his eyes and looked at her in amazement. Do you not see, then, this is all only a dream that can never become reality?

Do you not feel that this precious fantasy of your great and noble heart will never be realized? How? are you then so little acquainted with your father as not to know that he would destroy us both if we should dare thus to set at naught his paternal and his royal authority? Your birth would not secure you from his destroying fury, for you well know he is unyielding and reckless in his wrath; and the voice of consanguinity sounds not so loud in him that it would not be drowned by the thunder of his wrath. Poor child, you have learned that already! Remember with what cruelty he has already revenged himself on you for the pretended fault of your mother; how he transferred to you his wrath against her. Remember that he refused your hand to the Dauphin of France, not for the sake of your happiness, but because he said you were not worthy of so exalted a position. Anne Boleyn's bastard could never become Queen of France. And after such a proof of his cruel wrath against you, will you dare cast in his face this terrible insult?—compel him to recognize a subject, a servant, as his son?

Oh, this servant is, however, the brother of a Queen of England! said she shyly! My father loved Jane Seymour too warmly not to forgive her brother.

Ah, ah, you do not know your father! He has no heart for the past; or if he has, it is only to take vengeance for an injury or a fault, but not to reward love. King Henry would be capable of sentencing Anne Boleyn's daughter to death, and of sending to the block and rack Catharine Howard's brothers, because these two Queens once grieved him and wounded his heart; but he would not forgive me the least offence on account of my being the brother of a Queen who loved him faithfully and tenderly till her death. But I speak not of myself. I am a warrior, and have too often looked death in the face to fear him now. I speak only of you, Elizabeth. You have no right to perish thus. This noble head must not be laid upon the block. It is destined to wear a royal crown. A fortune still higher than love awaits you—fame and power! I must not draw you away from this proud future. The Princess Elizabeth, though abused and disowned, may yet one day mount the throne of England. The Countess Seymour never! she disinherits herself. Follow then your high destiny. Earl Seymour retires before a throne.

That is to say, you disdained me? asked she angrily stamping the floor with her foot. That is to say, the proud Earl Seymour holds the bastard too base for his coronet! That is to say, you love me not!

No, it means that I love you more than myself—better and more purely than any other man can love you; for this love is so great that it makes my selfishness and my ambition silent, and allows me to think only of you and your future.

Ah, sighed she mournfully, if you really loved me, you would not consider—you would not see the danger, nor fear death. You would think of nothing, and know nothing, save love.

Because I think of love, I think of you, said Seymour. I think that

you are to move along over the world, great, powerful and glorious, and that I will lend you my arm for this. I think of this, that my queen of the future needs a general who will win victories for her, and that I will be that general. But when this goal is reached; when you are queen; then you have the power from one of your subjects to make a husband; then it rests with your own will to elevate me to be the proudest, the happiest, and the most enviable of all men. Extend me your hand then, and I will thank and praise God that he is so gracious to me; and my whole existence will be spent in the effort to give you the happiness that you are so well entitled to demand.

And until then? asked she mournfully.

Until then, we will be constant, and love each other! cried he, as he tenderly pressed her in his arms.

She gently repelled him. Will you also be true to me till then?

True till death!

They have told me that you would marry the Duchess of Richmond, in order thereby to at length put an end to the ancient hatred between the Howards and Seymours.

Thomas Seymour frowned and his countenance grew dark. Believe me, this hatred is invincible, said he; and no matrimonial alliance could wash it away. It is an inheritance from many years in our families; and I am firmly resolved not to renounce my inheritance. I shall just as little marry the Duchess of Richmond, as Henry Howard will my sister, the Countess of Shrewsbury.

Swear that to me! Swear to me, that you say the truth, and that this haughty and coquettish Duchess shall never be your wife. Swear it to me, by all that is sacred to you!

I swear it by my love! exclaimed Thomas Seymour solemnly.

I shall then at least have one sorrow the less, sighed Elizabeth. I shall have no occasion to be jealous. And is it not true, she then said, is it not true, we shall often see each other? We will both keep this secret of this tower faithfully and sacredly; and after days full of privation and disappointment, we will here keep festival the nights full of blissful pleasure and sweet transport. But why do you smile, Seymour?

I smile, because you are pure and innocent as an angel, said he as he reverently kissed her hand. I smile because you are an exalted, god-like child, whom one ought to adore upon his knees, and to whom one ought to pray, as to the chaste goddess Vesta! Yes, my dear, beloved child, here we will, as you say, pass nights full of blissful pleasure; and may I be reprobate and damned, if I should ever be capable of betraying this sweet, guileless confidence, with which you favor me, and sully your angel purity!

Ah, we will be very happy, Seymour! said she smiling. I lack only one thing!—a friend, to whom I can tell my happiness, to whom I can speak of you. Oh, it often seems to me as if this love, which must always be concealed, always shut up, must at last burst my breast; as if this secret must with violence break a passage, and roar like a tempest

over the whole world. Seymour, I want a confidant of my happiness and my love.

Guard yourself well against desiring to seek such a one! exclaimed Seymour anxiously. A secret that three know, is a secret no more; and one day your confidant will betray us.

Not so; I know a woman who would be incapable of that—a woman who loves me well enough to keep my secret as faithfully as I myself; a woman who could be more than merely a confidant, who could be the protectress of our love. Oh, believe me, if we could gain her to our side, then our future would be a happy and blessed one, and we might easily succeed in obtaining the King's consent to our marriage.

And who is this woman?

It is the Queen.

The Queen? cried Thomas Seymour, with such an expression of horror that Elizabeth trembled; the Queen your confidant? But that is impossible! That would be plunging us both inevitably into ruin. Unhappy child, be very careful not to mention even but a word, a syllable of your relation to me. Be very careful not to betray to her, even by the slightest intimation, that Thomas Seymour is not indifferent to you! Ah, her wrath would dash to pieces you and me!

And why do you believe that? asked Elizabeth gloomily. Why do you suppose that Catharine would fly into a passion because Earl Seymour loves me? Or how?—It is she perhaps, that you love, and you dare not therefore let her know that you have sworn your love to me also? Ah, I now see through it all; I understand it all! You love the Queen,—her only. For that reason you will not go to the chapel with me; for that reason you swore that you would not marry the Dutchess of Richmond; and therefore—oh, my presentiment did not deceive me—therefore that frantic furious ride in Epping Forest to-day. Ah, the Queen's horse must of course become raving, and run away, that his lordship, the Master of Horse, might follow his lady, and with her get lost in the thicket of the woods!—And now, said she, her eyes flashing with anger, and raising her hand to heaven as if taking an oath, now I say to you: Take heed to yourself! Take heed to yourself, Seymour, that you do not even by a single word, or a single syllable betray your secret, for that word would crush you! Yes, I feel it, that I am no bastard, that I am my father's own daughter; I feel it in this wrath and this jealousy, that rages within me! Take heed to yourself, Seymour, for I will go hence and accuse you to the King, and the traitor's head will fall upon the scaffold!

She was beside herself. With clenched fists and a threatening air, she paced the room up and down. Tears gushed from her eyes; but she shook them out of her eyelashes, so that they fell scattering about her like pearls. Her father's impetuous and untractable nature stirred within her; and his blood seethed in her veins.

But Thomas Seymour had already regained his self-command and

composure. He approached the Princess and despite her struggles clasped her in his arms.

Little fool ! said he between his kisses. Sweet, dear fool, how beautiful you are in your anger and how I love you for it. Jealousy is becoming to love ; and I do not complain, though you are unjust and cruel towards me. The Queen is much too cold, and proud a heart, ever to be loved by any man. Ah, only to think this, is already treason to her virtue and modesty ; and surely she has not deserved this from us two, that we should disdain and insult her. She is the first that has always been just to you ; and to me she has ever been only a gracious mistress !

It is true, murmured Elizabeth completely ashamed, she is a true friend and mother ; and I have her to thank for my present position at this Court.

Then, after a pause, she said, smiling and extending her hand to the Earl : You are right. It would be a crime to suspect her ; and I am a fool. Forgive me, Seymour, forgive my absurd and childish anger ; and I promise you in return to betray our secret to no one, not even to the Queen.

Do you swear that to me ?

I swear it to you ! and I swear to you more than that : I will never again be jealous of her.

Then you do but simple justice to yourself and to the Queen also, said the Earl with a smile, as he drew her again to his arms.

But she pushed him gently back. I must now away. The morning dawns and the Archbishop awaits me in the royal chapel.

And what will you say to him, beloved ?

I will make my confession to him !

How ! so you will then betray our love to him ?

Oh, said she with a bewitching smile, that is a secret between us and God ; and only to him alone can we confess it ; because he alone can absolve us from it. Farewell then, Seymour, farewell, and think of me till we see each other again ! But when—say, when shall we meet again ?

When there is a night like this one, beloved, when the moon is not in the heavens.

Oh, then I could wish that there were a change of the moon every week, said she with the charming innocence of a child. Farewell, Seymour, farewell ; we must part.

She clung to his tall, sturdy form as the ivy twines around the trunk of the oak. Then they parted. The Princess slipped again softly and unseen into her apartments, and thence into the royal chapel ; the Earl descended again the spiral staircase which led to the secret door to the garden.

Unobserved and unseen he returned to his palace ; even his valet, who slept in the ante-room, did not see it, as the Earl crept past him lightly on his toes, and betook himself to his sleeping-room.

But no sleep came to his eyes that night, and his soul was restless

and full of fierce torment. He was angry with himself, and accused himself of treachery and perfidy ; and then again, full of proud haughtiness, he still tried to excuse himself and to silence his conscience, which was sitting in judgment on him.

I love her—her only ! said he to himself. Catharine possesses my heart, my soul ; I am ready to devote my whole life to her. Yes, I love her ! I have this day so sworn to her ; and she is mine for all eternity !

And Elizabeth ? asked his conscience. Have you not sworn truth and love to her also ?

No ! said he. I have only received her oath ; I have not given her mine in return. And when I vowed never to marry the Duchess of Richmond ; when I swore this “ by my love,” then I thought only of Catharine—of that proud, beautiful, charming woman, at once maidenly and voluptuous ; but not of this young, inexperienced, wild child—of this unattractive little Princess !

But this Princess may one day become a Queen, whispered his ambition.

That, however, is very doubtful, replied he to himself. But it is certain that Catharine will one day be the Regent, and if I am at that time her husband, then I am Regent of England.

That was the secret of his duplicity and his double treachery. Thomas Seymour loved nothing but himself, nothing but his ambition. He was capable of risking his life for a woman ; but for renown and greatness he would have gladly sacrificed this woman.

For him there was only one aim, one struggle : to become great and powerful above all the nobles of the kingdom—to be the first man in England. And to reach this aim, he would be afraid of no means ; he would shrink from no treachery and no sin.

Like the disciples of Loyola, he said in justification of himself, the end sanctifies the means.

And thus for him every means was right which conducted him to the end ; that is to say, to greatness and glory.

He was firmly convinced that he loved the Queen ardently ; and in his nobler hours he did really love her. Depending on the moment, a son of the hour, in him feeling and will varied with the rapidity of lightning, and he was ever wholly and completely that with which the moment inflamed him.

When, therefore, he stood before the Queen, he did not lie when he swore that he loved her passionately. He really loved her, with double warmth, since she had to his mind in some sort identified herself with his ambition. He adored her, because she was the means that might conduct him to his end ; because she might some day hold in her hands the sceptre of England. And on the day when this came to pass, he wished to be her lover and her lord. She had accepted him as her lord, and he was entirely certain of his future sway.

Consequently he loved the Queen, but his proud and ambitious heart could never be so completely animated by one love, as that there should

not be room in it for a second, provided this second love presented him a favorable chance for the attainment of the aim of his life.

Princess Elizabeth had this chance. And if the Queen would certainly become one day Regent of England, yet Elizabeth might some day perchance become Queen thereof. Of course it was as yet only a perhaps, but one might manage out of this perhaps to make a reality. Besides, this young, passionate child loved him, and Thomas Seymour was himself too young and too easily excitable to be able to despise a love that presented him with such enticing promises, and bright dreams of the future.

It does not become man to live for love alone, said he to himself as he now thought over the events of the night. He must struggle for the highest and wish to reach the greatest, and no means of attaining this end ought he to leave unemployed. Besides, my heart is large enough to satisfy a two-fold love. I love them both; both of these fair women who fetch me a crown. Let fate decide to which of the two I shall one day belong!

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